

THE SAINTS OF BENGAL



O.B.L. KAPOOR

Śrī Kṛṣṇa says that He cannot be attained without Bhakti. Śrī Caitanya and His followers explain and emphasise that He cannot be attained without *pure* Bhakti. Many do not understand what pure Bhakti really means. Each of the twenty-five biographies included in this book is the biography of a saint, who realized Kṛṣṇa by pursuing the path of pure Bhakti as preached by Śrī Caitanya. Each, therefore, stands like a light-post on the path of Bhakti to enable us to walk on it without losing the track and without falling or faltering until we attain Kṛṣṇa.

THE SAINTS OF BENGAL

Biographies of the saints, who lived in
Bengal during the last about two hundred
years and realized Kṛṣṇa by following
the path of pure Bhakti as preached
by Śrī Caitanya

O.B.L. Kapoor
(Ādikeśava Dās)



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CONTENTS

CHAPTER I	
Śrī Jagannātha Dāsa Bābājī	1
CHAPTER II	
Śrī Gaurakīśora Dāsa Bābājī	15
CHAPTER III	
Śrī Kṛṣṇa Sundara Rāya	25
CHAPTER IV	
Śrī Caitanya Dāsa Bābājī	31
CHAPTER V	
Śrī Bhagavān Dāsa Bābājī	41
CHAPTER VI	
Śrī Vijaya Kṛṣṇa Gosvāmī	45
CHAPTER VII	
Śrīmatī Yogamāyā Thākuraṇī	68
CHAPTER VIII	
Prabhu Jagadbandhu	78
CHAPTER IX	
Śrī Rādhāramaṇa Carāṇa Dāsa Deva	96
CHAPTER X	
Śrī Navadvīpa Candra Dāsa Bābājī	199
CHAPTER XI	
Śrī Govinda Dāsa Bābājī	222
CHAPTER XII	
Śrī Caitanya Dāsa Bābājī	230

CHAPTER XIII	
Sakhī Kisorī Dāsī	237
CHAPTER XIV	
Śrī Lalitā Sakhī Dāsī	244
CHAPTER XV	
Śrī Rāmadāsa Bābājī	271
CHAPTER XVI	
Śrīmatī Lakṣmī Maṇi Devī	319
CHAPTER XVII	
Śrī Kedāranātha Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura	330
CHAPTER XVIII	
Śrī Haribolānanda Ṭhākura	338
CHAPTER XIX	
Śrī Vipina Bihārī Caṭṭopādhyāya	345
CHAPTER XX	
Śrī Varnsīdāsa Bābājī	351
CHAPTER XXI	
Śrī Prāṇagopāla Gosvāmī	360
CHAPTER XXII	
Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda	374
CHAPTER XXIII	
Śrī Haridāsa Dāsa	385
CHAPTER XXIV	
Mā Maṇi	391
CHAPTER XXV	
Śrī Tinkāḍī Gosvāmī	418

PREFACE

Bhagavān is independent and self-willed. No one can attain Him without His mercy. But He is bound to be merciful to His devotees. He is perfect, self-sufficient and self-contented. But He always yearns for the offerings lovingly made by His devotees. He is just, fair and impartial to everyone. But He is always partial to His devotees. There is nothing right or wrong, moral or immoral that He cannot do for His devotees. He attracts everyone, but is attracted by Bhakti in the heart of His devotees. Therefore the *śruti* says, "*bhaktivaśaḥ puruṣaḥ bhaktireva bhūyasī*—Bhakti subjugates Bhagavān; Bhakti alone is great." To attain Bhakti is to attain Bhagavān.

But how to attain Bhakti? *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* says it can be attained by listening to the life-stories of the Bhaktas, who have made Bhagavān captive in their hearts by their Bhakti (Bh. 3.13.4).

This book presents to the reader the life-stories of twenty-five such devotees. They lived in Bengal during the past about two hundred years and pursued the line of Bhakti preached by Śrī Caitanya.

The material for these biographies is drawn from extensive biographical literature relating to them in Bengali. One of the most important and authoritative sources is *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Jīvana*, Vol II, written by Śrī Haridāsa Dāsa, who was himself a Siddha Gauḍīya saint and a

The Saints of Bengal

scholar of repute. He has in this work provided valuable first-hand information regarding most of the saints, whose biographies are included in this book. Independent books providing detailed information regarding some of these saints are also available, as for example the following:

1. *Bandhulīlā-taraṅginī*, Biography of Prabhu Jagadbandhu in ten volumes by Śrī Gopibandhu Dāsa.
2. *Śrī Sadgurusaṅga*, Reminiscences of Vijaya Kṛṣṇa Gosvāmī in five volumes by Śrī Kuladā Brahmacārī.
3. *Vijaya Kṛṣṇa-jīvana*, Life of Vijaya Kṛṣṇa by Śrī Jagadbandhu Maitra.
4. *Bālaka Vijaya Kṛṣṇa*, by Śrī Sītānātha Gosvāmī.
5. *Carita-Sudhā*, biography of Śrī Rādhāramaṇa Caraṇa Dāsa Deva in six volumes.
6. *Śrī Śrī Prāṇagopāla Gosvāmī Prabhu-pāda*, by Madana Gopāla Gosvāmī.
7. *Śrī Śrī Prabhu-pāda Prāṇagopāla Gosvāmī — Janmaśatābdi-smārikā*.
8. *Śrī Śrī Vijaya Kṛṣṇa Gosvāmī Parijana*, by Durgeśandra Bandopādyaḥ, containing the biography of Śrī Yogamāyā Ṭhākuraṇī.
9. *Śrī Śrī Mā O Saptasādhikā*, by Svāmī Tejānanda, containing the biography of Śrī Lakṣmī Maṇi Devī.
10. *Jīvana Gathā*, autobiography of Mā Māṇi.
11. *Vṛndāvana-līlā*, Mā Maṇi's own description of the *Vṛndāvana-līlā* experienced by her.

I am deeply indebted to my friend Śrī Badrinārāyaṇa Bhāgavata Bhūṣaṇa, the Founder-*ācārya* of Śrī Caitanya Bhakti Rakṣaka Mandapa for kindly publishing this work and my other books, which he has already published. I must also express my indebtedness to Śrīmatī Gaura Pūrṇimā Devī for kindly composing the work on the

Preface

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O.B.L. Kapoor
(Ādikeśava Dāsa)

Nṛsimha Caturdaśī, May 13th, 1995
Rādhāramaṇa Mārg.
Vṛndāvana.

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Bh.</i>	<i>Śrīmad Bhāgavatam</i>
<i>Bh.S.</i>	<i>Bhakti Saṁdarbha</i>
<i>Bh.R.S.</i>	<i>Bhaktirasāmṛta-sindhu</i>
<i>Cc.</i>	<i>Caitanya Caritāmṛta</i>
<i>C.Bh.</i>	<i>Caitanya Bhāgavata</i>
<i>G.V.J.</i>	<i>Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Jīvana</i>
<i>H.B.V.</i>	<i>Haribhaktivilāsa</i>



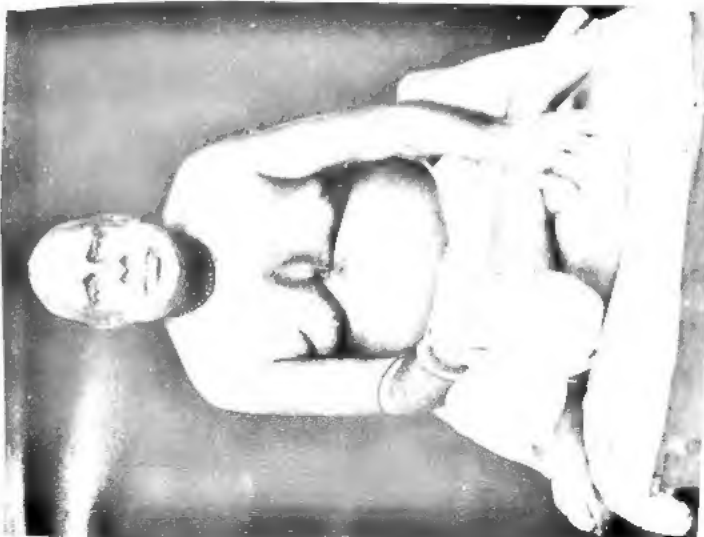
SRI JAGAN NATH DAS BABAJI MAHARAJ



SRI GAUR KISHORA DAS BABAJI MAHARAJ



SRI RAMADAS BABAJI MAHARAJ



SRI KE DARNATH BHAKTINOD THAKUR



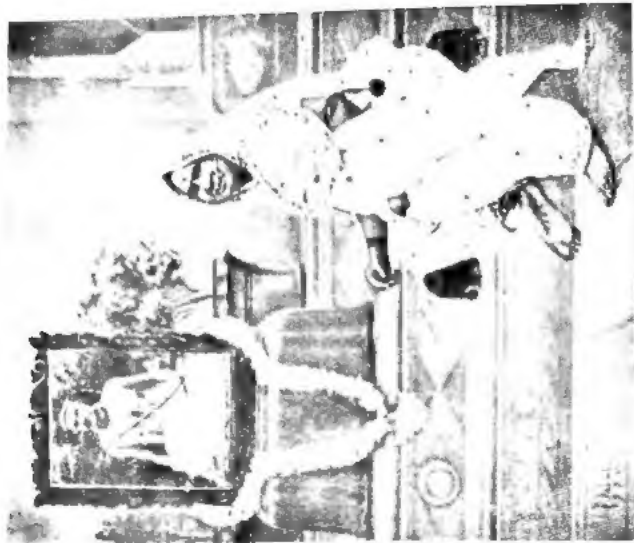
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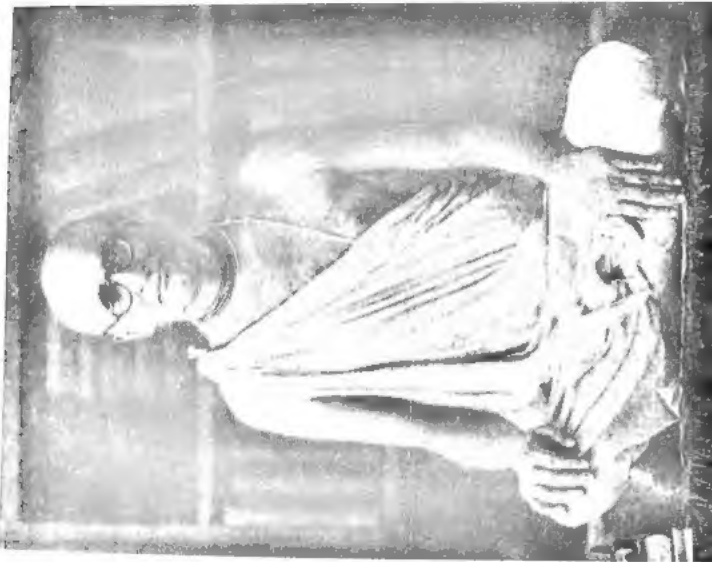
SRI VLUAYA KRISHNA GOSVAMI



SRI BANSIDAS BABAJI MAHARAJ



SRI LAUTA SAHI DASI



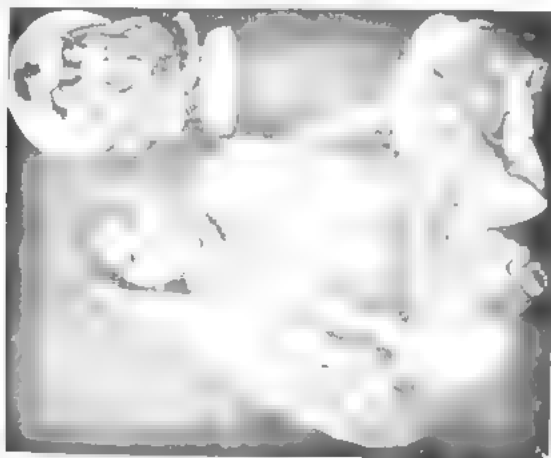
SRI BHAKTISIDDHANT SARASVATI GOSVAMI PRABHUPAD



SRI RADHARAMAN CHARAN DAS DEVA



SRI YOGMAYA DEVI



SRI LAKSMI MANI DEVI

CHAPTER I

ŚRĪ JAGANNĀTHA DĀSA BĀBĀJĪ (Navadvīpa)

Śrī Jagannātha Dāsa Bābājī had a very long span of life. He lived for 147 years. He used to stay for six months in Vraja and six months in Navadvīpa. He was known throughout Bengal and Vraja as a *siddha puruṣa*. Once when he was in Navadvīpa, Gopinātha Rāya and Jānakīnātha Rāya, two self-concerned landlords of Bhāgyakula went to see him. They said to him, "Bābā, we are told that you are a *siddha puruṣa*. Show us some miracle."

"What? Who told you that I am *siddha*?" As Bābā said this he tapped his stick against the ground several times.

"Let us go. Bābā is angry," said the frightened landlords and began to leave.

"No, no, I am not angry. I was only trying to drive away a she-goat, who was eating up the *tulasī* plant in Lokanātha Gosvāmī's *kunja* in Rādhākunda," Bābā said humbly.

The landlords were surprised. How could Bābā see and drive away an animal hundreds of miles away? Immediately they sent a reply-paid telegram to someone in Rādhākunda to seek confirmation of the episode. The reply was that a she-goat had actually eaten up the *tulasī* plant in Lokanātha Gosvāmī's *kunja* that day.

The landlords again went to Bābā and apologized for their arrogance. When they had gone Bābā said to Bihārī, his disciple. "Poor souls of Kali! They would not believe without seeing. I showed them something so that they might not suffer on account of any offense against me."

The landlords were fools to have tested Bābā's accomplishment as a saint by asking him to show a miracle. Bābā's *siddha* state was obvious. He was himself a miracle. He was at that time one hundred and twenty-five years old. His body was bent like a semi-circle. His long brows hung before his eyes like curtains. He could hardly walk. If he had to go anywhere, his disciple Bihārī had to carry him on his shoulders. Still his stamina in *bhajana* was unique. He would do *japa* almost throughout the night. In the morning he would perform a thousand *daṇḍavats*¹ before the deities. He would often fast continually for three days without even drinking water. He would offer *tulasī* leaves to Gīndhārī with the help of his two disciples, who would stand on either side of him and lift his eye-brows with their hands to enable him to do so. In *samkīrtana* he would dance and sing and while dancing jump up to four feet above the ground in ecstasy.

The great saints do not like to exhibit their power of performing miracles. But they are sometimes compelled to do so to instill faith in skeptical minds or to relieve someone's suffering out of mercy. Jagannātha Dāsa Bābājī also had to do this sometimes.

Once entire Navadvīpa was flooded. Almost everybody had to quit. But Bābā did not. Bihārī, who was

his only attendant at that time, fell seriously ill. Pyārimohana Gosvāmī of Mahāprabhu's Temple called a doctor from Calcutta. The doctor pronounced his condition as very critical. He said, "The patient would die before day-break." Lālā Bābū, a landlord, called his Kavirāja. He also confirmed what the doctor had said. Then Bābā said, "Allright, I will see who takes Bihārī away from me." He sat near his bed and began to do *japa*. After half an hour Bihārī opened his eyes and said "Bābā, I am very hungry." Bābā immediately cooked some *mohana-bhoga*² and gave it to him to eat. After he had eaten, Bābā asked him to go and cook for the deity. Bihārī took his bath and began to cook.

Bihārī was a *Vrajavāsī*. He did not know Bengali. But Bābā asked him to read *Cartanya Caritāmṛta* everyday so that he might listen. He said, "Bābā, I do not know Bengali." But Bābā asked him to purchase a copy of *Cartanya Caritāmṛta*, which he did. He then asked him to read. Bihārī only looked vacantly at his face. Bābā said angrily, "Don't look at me. Look at the book." Bihārī began to look at the book and to his surprise he found that he was able to read *Cartanya Caritāmṛta* like one, who had already learnt Bengali and studied *Caritāmṛta* well.

Similarly, Bābā said to Bihārī one day, "Bihārī, I shall sing, you accompany me on the *mṛdaṅga*³" Bihārī said, "Bābā! I have never even touched a *mṛdaṅga*. How can I play on it? "There is no harm in trying," replied Bābā. So Bābā started singing and Bihārī took up the *mṛdanga*. And lo! He was playing on it like an expert.

² A kind of pudding

³ An oval shaped drum generally used in *samkīrtana*

¹ Offering prostrated obeisances, like a rod.

The *siddha* saints sometimes perform miracles even without knowing or willing. In the state of *bhāva* or ecstasy brought about by stimulation of the sentiment of divine love, miracles happen automatically, because in that state the saint is in tune with the Lord, the infinite source of inconceivable power or energy (*acintya śakti*) that transcends the laws of nature or science. This happened in the case of Bābā on numerous occasions. Once a *kirtana* party passed by the side of his cottage in Navadvīpa. On hearing the *kirtana*, Bābā asked Bihārī to take him near the party. Bihārī at once lifted him on his shoulders and took him there. Bābā laid himself prostrate before the party in obeisance. Soon after the *kirtana*-song filled him with such ecstasy that he stood up and began to sing and dance with the party. He was no more the bent up old man, who had to be carried by Bihārī on his shoulders. He was walking along with the party and singing and dancing with them. As he sang and danced he leapt two or three feet above the ground in ecstasy, and sometimes fell unconscious on the road. Since the road was under repairs and covered with small pieces of stone all over, the fall bruised his body, but he was absolutely unaware of it. When he thus fell unconscious, the devotees sang *kirtana* close to his ears. Then he regained consciousness and again started walking, singing and dancing, as if nothing had happened. *Bhāva* is contagious. Bābā's *bhāva* touched the hearts of the members of the party like electric current and they were also lost in ecstasy. Their movement, therefore, became slow. They took six hours to cover the distance from Bābā's cottage to the banyan tree in Rānighāta, where they stopped. Bābā was all the time walking with them and dancing and jumping in a state of trance!

Bābā had practised a long course of *sādhana* to attain this state. He always had stoic apathy to the world and was completely free from attachment. He would not even touch money. Once Bihārī was carrying him somewhere on his shoulders. A rich man offered him a rupee. Bābā asked Bihārī to put it in his pocket. After Bihārī had gone about a mile, Bābā asked him to turn back and go again to the house of the man. He called the man and said, "Please, take back your rupee. I am told you have thousands of rupees. I could not bear the bite of a single rupee. I wonder how you bear the bite of so many rupees." The rupee was with Bihārī, but it was biting Bābā, because he had touched it mentally by asking him to keep it.

Bābā lived like an ascetic. His diet was strictly regulated. During the four months of the rainy season, he took in the first month only four bananas in the evening, in the second month guavas, in the third month whey, and in the fourth month boiled banana-flowers without salt.

Bābā once went to Hṛṣīkeśa for *mantra-puraścārana*.⁴ Bihārī went with him. During *puraścārana* he got up at 3 a.m., took his bath, closed the door of his room and sat down for *japa* till the evening. Throughout this period he observed silence and did not eat or drink anything. If he had to go for urination, or even if he passed gas, he stopped *japa* and bathed before resuming it. In the evening he took *haviṣyānna* (boiled rice with ghee). After two months one day he

⁴ Continuous repetition of a *mantra* for a specified period under specified rules and regulations with the object of attaining a particular end.

saw a tree laden with too many fruits. He was excited and said to Bihārī, "Bihārī look, how many fruits on this tree!" This broke his silence and he had to re-start *puraścārana* from the beginning. After three months he had the *darśana* of Gaura-Nitāi. This is how he became *siddha*. He used to say that if one wanted to see Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu or Śrī Kṛṣṇa in this life, he should do *puraścārana*.

Siddha saints are self-willed and fearless. They live in a world of their own and do what they like, caring little for what others will say. Once, when Bābā was in Vṇḍāvana he asked a sweeper to give him a *roti*⁵ to eat. The sweeper said, "Why cut a joke with me Bābā?"

"No, not a joke. I am very hungry," replied Bābā.

"But I am a sweeper. How can you eat bread from my hand?"

"What of that? You are a sweeper of Vṇḍāvana. A sweeper of Vṇḍāvana is superior even to Brahmins."

The sweeper could not disobey a saint like Bābā. Reluctantly he gave a *roti* to him and he ate.

Bihārī was watching this with dismay. He said, "What have you done Bābā? Society will treat you as an out-caste. It will be difficult for you to stay in Vṇḍāvana." Bābā only smiled.

News spread like wild fire throughout Vṇḍāvana that Bābā had eaten a sweeper's *roti*. Soon came Nīlamanī Gosvāmī, Rādhikā Nātha Gosvāmī, Gaura Śiromaṇi, Gaura Sundara Rāya and other dignitaries of Vṇḍāvana in a delegation. Bābā asked Bihārī to give them *āsana*⁶ to sit. They seated themselves, but

⁵ Flour cake baked at home.

⁶ Mat, carpet or anything to sit on.

kept looking at each other for sometime, for no one could muster courage to say anything.

Bābā said, "I know why you have come. Why not speak out your mind?"

Then they said in a submissive tone, "Bābā! you are the crest-jewel of the entire Vraja. If anyone says anything against you, we feel very much hurt. Now everybody is talking against you. Some say, 'Bābā has gone mad.' Others say, 'If Bābā defies the age old traditions, what will happen to society?'"

Bābā replied, "You are all learned people. Don't you know the importance of the *raja* (dust) of Vṇḍāvana? It is so charged with *Kṛṣṇa-prema* that even Brahmā longs to be a particle of it. Is not the sweeper of Vṇḍāvana, who serves the *raja* and rolls and bathes in it incessantly, therefore, purer than anyone else?"

No one could say anything further.

Bābā was self-willed to such an extent that at times he treated even the deities he worshipped as he liked. Once he was living in Sūryakunḍa in Vraja. The people of Sūryakunḍa had made a cottage for him. But Bābā wanted to serve Gaura-Nitāi, so they also made a temple for the deities. Bihārī brought two beautiful *mūrtis*⁷ of Gaura-Nitāi from Bengal. They were duly installed in the temple. The deities were made of brass and glittered like gold. One night some robbers came while Bābā was doing *bhajana*. They said, "Bābā, we are robbers; you must give us all that you possess." Bābā said, "What do I possess? I am only a servant. The Masters are in the temple. You go to Them." The robbers entered the temple. They were overjoyed to see

⁷ Images.

the deities. They thought the deities were made of gold. So they wrapped them up in a blanket and wanted to run away. But the chief of the robbers, who was carrying the deities, struck against the top frame of the door and fell down along with the deities. Thinking that to be an ill omen the robbers left the deities and ran away. Next morning Bābā asked Bihārī to give away the deities to someone in Vṛndāvana. Bihārī took the deities to Vṛndāvana and gave them to one Mā Gosvāminī of Gayesapur. At present the deities are installed in a temple in Gopāla Bāgha in Vṛndāvana. They are known as *sonāra* (golden) Gaurāṅga and Nītāi.

After sometime Bābā again said to Bihārī, "Bihārī, I do not feel happy without a deity. Get me a *mūrti* of Mahāprabhu from somewhere." Bihārī brought a six-armed *mūrti* of Mahāprabhu from Dinū Bābājī, a Manipurī Vaiṣṇava, who lived in village Mukharī near Rādhākūṇḍa. The *mūrti* was duly installed and worshipped by Bābā for ten years. After ten years he said to Bihārī, "Go and give the deity to someone in Vṛndāvana." Bihārī gave the deity to Bābā Nityānanda Dāsa of Gopālaguru Maṭha in Vṛndāvana. At present that deity is being worshipped in a temple in the lane by the side of the boundary-wall of Nidhuvana in Vṛndāvana.

It is difficult to say why Bābā twice brought the deities and sent them away. Did he not commit an *aparādha* (offense) by doing so? It is not proper to judge the behaviour of a *siddha* saint by ordinary canons of behaviour. For they are above all rules and regulations laid down in the scriptures for ordinary devotees. The loving intimacy, that develops between him and the deity he worships, does not countenance any rules and regulations. In the game of love that goes on between

the two, both are free to behave as they choose. Both play hide and seek with each other. Perhaps the two episodes narrated above are examples of hide and seek that was going on between the deities and Bābā. Or perhaps the deities had done something to incur the displeasure of Bābā. Examples are not lacking of the devotee's chastisement of the deity for his misdeed. Yaśoda's chastisement of the child Kṛṣṇa is very well known. The stories of chastisement of the deity by other devotees are also not uncommon.

It may be that Jagannātha Dāsa Bābājī had ousted Gaura-Nītāi from his temple, because he thought they had invited the robbers and created disturbance in his *bhājana*. But what offense had the six-armed Mahāprabhu committed to deserve his ousting? Bābā alone knows. The ways of the saints, who have realized the Lord, are no less inscrutable than the ways of the Lord Himself.

Once Bābā said to Bihārī, "Bihārī, let us go to Navadvīpa."

"When Bābā?"

"When? Just now."

Bihārī lifted Bābā on his shoulders and started for Navadvīpa. As he lifted Bābā, he felt that he was lifting a heavy stone. But soon after he began to feel as if he was carrying a thin piece of cloth on his shoulders. Walking all the distance on foot, Bihārī reached Navadvīpa within nine days. Who can say whether this was due to the miraculous power of Bābā or the devotion of Bihārī Dāsa to the guru?

When Bihārī was passing through the forest of Bhāgalapur, he suddenly stopped and began to turn back. Bābā asked, "What's the matter Bihārī?" Bihārī replied in low voice, "There is a tiger sitting in front." Bābā

spoke commandingly "No, no, not tiger, a *pārṣada* (companion) of Mahāprabhu, who has come to greet you." As he said this the tiger looked at Bābā and disappeared in the forest.

The last time Bābā went to Navadvīpa, he decided never to come back to Vṛndāvana. The news spread all over Vraja that Bābā was leaving Vṛndāvana for good. Nīlamanī Prabhu, Rādhikānātha Prabhu and other Vaiṣṇavas, panditas and Vrajavāsīs started coming to persuade him not to go. They asked him, "Bābā, why are you leaving Vṛndāvana in your old age?"

The question brought about a sudden change in Bābā. His eyes were filled with tears, his body trembled, and the hairs of the body stood on ends. He replied in a voice choked with emotion, "I am leaving, because I want to pass the last days of my life in Navadvīpa at the lotus-feet of Gaura-Nitāi. I am a lowly person. I do not know how many offenses I have committed. Gaura-Nitāi of Navadvīpa are more merciful than Kṛṣṇa of Vṛndāvana. They condone the offenses of the *jīva*, give him a loving embrace and accept him as Their *pārṣada*."

On way to Navadvīpa Bābā stopped at Ambikā Kālā to meet his old friend and God-brother, the great saint Bhagavān Dāsa Bābājī of Kālā. The scene of their meeting was unique. Never had the persons, who were present at the meeting, seen such a scene before. On seeing each other, both the saints were so filled with joy that they clasped each other. Interlocked in each other's loving embrace they began to roll on the ground in a fit of emotion. This continued for hours. Both seemed to be in *samādhi*. It appeared that the *samādhi* would never break. There was nothing unnatural about it, because

it was not a meeting between ordinary persons; but a meeting of hearts between two devotees, who had realized Kṛṣṇa, and whose hearts were overflowing with *Kṛṣṇa-prema*. *Prema* is so powerful that it makes not only the devotees, but even Kṛṣṇa rock and roll and dance in ecstasy (Cc. 3.18.17).

The disciples of the two saints, however, became very anxious. Viṣṇudāsa Bābā, the foremost disciple of Bhagavān Dāsa said to Bihārī, "It is now 11 p.m.; we must do something to bring them back to consciousness. Jagannātha Dāsa Bābājī must be very tired and hungry after his long journey. He must have something to eat."

Bihārī said, "Yes, Bābā has not had even a morsel of food for the last three days." As he said this, he lifted Jagannātha Dāsa Bābājī in his lap and began to massage his chest. After sometime Bābā regained consciousness. Looking at Bihārī he said, "Bihārī, have you taken food?"

"How can I Bābā, until you have eaten? You have not yet taken anything and it is now 11 o'clock at night."

"Night! No, no, it is evening."

Everybody laughed. Bābā stayed with Bhagavān Dāsa Bābā for ten days and then went to Navadvīpa.

On reaching Navadvīpa Bihārī asked, "Bābā, in which *āśrama* would you stay?"

Any *āśrama* in Navadvīpa would have gladly welcomed Bābā. But Bābā said, "I will not go to any *āśrama*. I will stay under a tree." So he stayed under a tree. After sometime Bihārī, with the help of Śrī Kerdāranātha Datta, known as Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, purchased a piece of land near the tree and built two thatched cottages on it. Later three brick cottages were built and a boundary wall erected round them by Śrī

Bānamālī Rāya Bahādura of Tarāsa. Bābā lived there for 32 years.

He left the body at the age of 147. There was a *keli-kadamba* tree in Bābā's *āśrama*, under which he used to sit for meditation and chant 'Hare Kṛṣṇa.' After Bābā's disappearance, the tree began to dry up and its bark fell off. On its naked body appeared the words "Hare Kṛṣṇa" which, though not very distinct, could easily be read.

Four or five days before Bābā left the body he said to Bihārī, "Bihārī, you have rendered so much service to me, but I have not yet been able to do anything for you. Today I will give you four or five cart-loads of wealth."

"Well said Bābā. You do not have anything except a broken *karavā*⁸ and you will give me cart-loads of wealth!"

"Oh Bihārī, you do not understand. I will ask Mahāprabhu and He will easily arrange. But you let me know whether you want me or wealth."

"I want you, not wealth," Bihārī replied quickly. Bābā was happy to hear this. He said, "Very good, Bihārī. By opting for me you will have me, but not wealth. At the same time you will not have to suffer for want of anything. You will live for a hundred years. Always chant *Harināma*. Kali will not be able to do any harm to you. You will be blessed with the vision of Gaura-Nitāi."

Nothing is known about the early life of Jagannātha Dāsa Bābājī, except that he had taken *dīkṣā* from Śrī Jagadānanda Gosvāmī of Śṛṅgāravāṭa of Vṛndāvana and

⁸ Earthen vessel for keeping water

Vaiṣṇava *sannyāsa* from *siddha* Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī of Govardhana.

Bābā had a large number of disciples, some of whom became *siddha*. Among his *siddha* disciples the names of the following may be mentioned:

1. Śrī Bihārī Dāsa Bābājī
2. Śrī Bhāgavata Dāsa Bābājī
3. Śrī Gaurahari Dāsa Bābājī of Navadvīpa
4. Śrī Rāmahari Dāsa Bābājī of Vṛndāvana
5. Śrī Nityānanda Dāsa Bābājī of Barasāna
6. Śrī Kṛṣṇa Dāsa Bābājī of Kādambakhandi

Bābā used to give valuable advice to the *sādhakas*. For instance he said:

1 - You must avoid the company of women, or the company of a man who keeps the company of women, or even the company of a man who is in any way associated with the person keeping the company of women.

2 - If you want to realize the Supreme End, you must repeat *Harināma* regularly and steadfastly. Regularity is important. It should be maintained even at the cost of one's life.

3 - You should not forget Gaura, for He is even more benevolent and merciful than Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is like a just ruler. Who takes into account your offenses in his administration of justice. Gaura does not take into account your offenses. While Kṛṣṇa is interested more in dispensation of justice, Gaura is interested more in dispensation of mercy. From this point of view, *Gaura-kīrtana* also is more useful than *Kṛṣṇa-kīrtana*.

Gaura-kīrtana is, for example: 'Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Prabhu Nityānanda, Śrī Advaita Gadādhara Śrīvāsādi Gaura Bhaktavṛnda.'

4 - Kṛṣṇa is the *avatāra* of Dvāpara, Gaura is the *avatāra* of Kali. We should sing the name and the hymns of the *avatāra* in Whose age we live just as we sing the praises of the king in whose kingdom we live.

CHAPTER II

ŚRĪ GAURAKIŚORA DĀSA BĀBĀJĪ

(Navadvīpa)

In Faridpur district of East Bengal on the bank of the river Padmā there is a village called Bāgyān, where Gaurakiśora Dāsa Bābājī was born. His father gave him the name Vamśī Dāsā. He was married at an early age. His wife died when he was twenty-nine years old. After the death of his wife he renounced the world, took *veśa*¹ from Śrī Bhāgavata Dāsa Bābājī, a disciple of Śrī Jagannātha Dāsa Bābājī and went to Vṛndāvana. He lived in Vraja and practised *sādhana* for thirty years. In 1893 he returned to Bengal and lived in Navadvīpa till the end.

He was trained in *Rāgānugā Bhajana*² and *vairāgya* by *siddha* Śrī Nityānanda Dāsa Bābā of Madanamohana Thaura of Vṛndāvana. His humility and *vairāgya* were proverbial. He collected provisions from the householders, fuel in the shape of pieces of wood from the streets and thrown away earthen pots from various places in Navadvīpa. He washed the pots with Ganges water and cooked food in them. If he could not find fuel or time for cooking on account of absorption in *bhajana*, he ate raw rice after soaking it in water. He made the roof of his cottage from thrown

¹ *Vaiṣṇava sannyāsa*.

² *Bhajana* of which the guiding principle is love, not the injunctions of the *sāstras*.

away clothes lying anywhere, not hesitating to collect them even from the funeral ground. In other words he used only those things, which were discarded by people and were of no use to them and did not depend on anyone for anything.

One day Bābā picked up from the vegetable market of Navadvipa a cast away eggplant, partly eaten by insects. He sat near a bush in Radhāramaṇa garden and cut it into pieces. He dipped the pieces in Ganges water in a coconut shell, put *tulasī* leaf in it and offering the same to Gaura³ began to sing *bhoga-ārati* "Bhaja Patitapāvana Gaurahari, etc." While singing his entire body swelled on account of horripilation and tears of love streaming out of his eyes drenched his cheeks. Lalitā Dāśī the great *siddha* saint of Radhāramaṇa garden was watching everything from behind. After offering the eggplant to Gaura he started eating. While he was eating it appeared from his face that he was enjoying the unique taste of some transcendental food beyond the reach of human beings.

Because Bābā always swam in the ocean of *bhāva* (love), he was sometimes unaware of what he did. Like one who was mad he sometimes wore *kañthī*⁴ and *tilaka*,⁵ had the bag of rosary for counting beads in his hand and carried Narottama Thākura's *Premabhakti-candrikā* wherever he went. Sometimes he was seen without *kañthī* and *tilaka* had in his hand instead of a rosary of *tulasī* beads, a *mālā* (garland) made of old cloth with knots instead of beads for counting, and no clothes at all on his body. In this state he went for *mādhukari*⁶ with an iron pot in his hand. The

³ The deity he worshipped

⁴ A necklace of *tulasī* beads

⁵ A sectarian mark on the forehead

⁶ Begging food.

street boys, who saw him, thought he was mad and started teasing him in various ways. But in his state of *bhāva* he took a boy of dark colour as Kṛṣṇa and a boy of white colour as Gaura and cried in his child-like manner, "Look Mā Yaśodā! Your Kṛṣṇa is making faces at me" or "Look Mā Śacī! Your Gaura is teasing me."

Once when he had gone out for *mādhukari* some wicked person put some meat in his pot instead of vegetables or rice. Since then he stopped going for *mādhukari*. He sat on the bank of Ganges with some thrown away earthen pots in front of him. He ate whatever the people gave him in the pots without his asking anyone for anything.

Sometimes Bābā went to the house of Īsana Sāhā to see Mā Tārā Dāśī. Once he went to her on *ekādaśī*⁷ day. He was pained to see her boiling milk by burning dry leaves of jack-fruit tree as fuel. He said to her, "Mā! Tomorrow your son will dine here."

"Very well," said Tārā, "But your Mā suffers from colic. Today she is fasting. If you do not come tomorrow morning she will have to suffer."

"No Mā, I will certainly come," said Bābā.

But the next day he remained so much absorbed in *bhājana* that he forgot everything about it. He went to her in the evening with a big load of wood to be used as fuel on his head and began to shout, "Mā! Mā!" Mā opened the door. Keeping the load of fuel inside the house he said, "Mā! You know your mad child is forgetful. Today also he forgot and committed an offense. Now come, let me have something to eat." Tārā Dāśī brought boiled rice without anything else with which to eat rice. She knew that Bābā had given up

⁷ Eleventh day of lunar fortnight.

eating pulses and vegetables. On her insisting to eat rice with vegetables he used to say "Look Mā! If your naughty child begins to eat delicious things, his senses will get out of control and *bhajana* will not be possible." There was nothing for Tārā Dāsī to say about the load of wood. She knew that her 'naughty' child had seen her boiling milk with the fuel of leaves. Besides it was his habit to do this. He brought wood from the forest and kept it at night sometimes in front of the gate of one temple, sometimes another, so that it could be used for cooking for the deity.

Once during winter season Śrīpāda Prāṇagopāla Gosvāmī gave a blanket to Bābā. The next day he went to him with the blanket and returning the same said, "Your blanket failed to befrend me. It made me sleep throughout yesterday night and did not let me do *bhajana*."

With Bābā chanting of the Name of the Lord was not an exercise. It was natural and spontaneous. The Name always danced on his tongue and in his heart and manifested itself to him in the form of the *līlā* (divine sports) of the Lord in all its transcendental sweetness and glory. If per chance it ceased to manifest, he felt so restless that he went to the Ganges to drown himself. As soon as he entered the river and drowned himself up to the neck, the *līlā* was revived and he came back.

Once, when he lived in Rānā Kī Dharmaśālā, he was so charged with the passion for chanting the Name that he continued shouting *Ha! Kṛṣṇa Caitanya!* at the top of his voice for hours. At that time came from Śrīkhandā Śrīpāda Sarvadānanda Thākura and Śrī Rākhālānanda Thākura for his *darśana*⁸. They apprehended that if he continued chant-

ing like that his throat might burst. To bring about a change in his *bhāva* they together began to sing in melodious voice, "*Naraharīra prāṇa Gaura*" etc." The device worked. He stopped chanting and came out of the room and began talking with them.

Once again he was so much possessed with the passion for chanting *Harināma* that he continued chanting *Ha! Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya!* for 13 days, beating his breast and pulling his hair in *viraha* (separation from the Divine).

When Bābā's fame as a *Siddha Mahātmā* reached far and wide and many people started coming to him, he searched out a place, where no one could visit him. There was a latrine in the old house of one Girīśa Bābū, which was not being used. He lived in that latrine and did *bhajana* undisturbed by visitors for some time. After his disappearance once a devotee lived in that latrine and did *bhajana* throughout one night. He felt that every brick of the latrine was echoing the Name, which Bābā used to chant. He was surprised to see that even the material bricks were spiritualised by the Name chanted by him.

One day Bābā was returning from the Ganges with the pot of *mādhukari* placed over his head upside down. On the way he saw two Bābājīs coming from Phānsitalā Ghāta, singing 'Hare Kṛṣṇa' *mantra* in melodious voice with the accompaniment of *ekatārā*⁹. As soon as they came near Bābā, one of them asked, 'Bābā! Where is your *āśrama*?' Bābā lifted the *mādhukari* pot from his head and, threatening to hurl it over him, said in rage, "*Sālā*¹⁰ was singing *Harināma*. I was overwhelmed with *bhāva* and was think-

⁸ A musical instrument.

¹⁰ '*Sālā*' literally means wife's brother, it is also used as a term of abuse.

⁸ Seeing. The term is generally used for seeing the deity or a holy person.

ing what I should give him in reward—What have you to do with my *āśrama*?"

Bābā did not easily initiate anyone. He tried to avoid the person who went to him for initiation. He loved Śrī Kedāranātha Thākura, a great devotee and retired magistrate, who lived in Godrumadvīpa across the Ganges and did *bhajana*.

It is said that once he went to Bābā with the purpose of taking *veśa* from him. Bābā came to know about it. He hid himself in the verandah of the house of a prostitute. Bhaktivinoda Thākura tried to search him, but not finding him anywhere returned disappointed. Then Bābā went to Radhāramaṇa garden and began to laugh aloud. Lalitā Dāsi asked him why he was laughing. He replied, "Today Kedāranātha Bābū came to see me. I tricked him. I went and sat in the verandah of a Mātājī. He searched but could not find me."¹¹

One day a devotee came from Noākhālī to request him for initiation. As he sat down after making obeisance to him he asked, "What made you come at this time?"

"I have come to request you for *dīkṣā* (initiation)," he replied hesitatingly.

"How many districts and rivers did you have to cross?"

After the devotee had replied Bābā said angrily, "You have come after crossing so many districts and rivers only to rob Bābā of the little fortune¹² he has!"

The devotee had to return disappointed.

One day, when Bābā was returning after a bath in the Ganges with an umbrella in his hand, the same devotee

again came and falling at his feet began to weep. Bābā tried courteously to get rid of him. But he did not go. Then he scolded and beat him with his umbrella. Still the devotee continued to weep and pray. At last he took pity on him and said, "Listen to this *mantra* containing sixteen names and thirty-two letters, which I give. Do *japa*¹³ of this *mantra* keeping count on beads. Within a year you will have *darśana* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. If you do not have *darśana* come to me." Saying this he uttered the *mantra* in his ear. Bābā laid all the stress on the repetition of the Name. He forbade *līlā-smaraṇa* (contemplation of *līlā*). He said that each letter contained in the Name was pregnant with *līlā*. When one contemplated the letters, the *līlā* manifested itself. He emphasized that one must not let a single moment pass without the Name and advised that if some worldly thought came into the mind while repeating the Name, the Name should be chanted aloud. He knew about the *Nāma-kīrtana* performed in different places in Navadvīpa and was concerned about its successful performance.

Once Śrī Kāśhī Bābū, a famous singer of Tripura came to him for his *darśana*. He said to him, "Bābā Mahārāja! You go at once to the temple of Mahāprabhu. Mahāprabhu wants to hear your *kīrtana* and is impatiently waiting for you." When he went there, he was surprised to find that a number of people were actually waiting there for him to listen to his *kīrtana*.

Śrī Harendra Kumāra Sen and Aśvanī Bhattācārya, the advocate of Agaratalā came to him for *dīkṣā*. Bābā refused to give them *dīkṣā*. On their insistence, however, he said, "All right, pray to Mahāprabhu. I shall also pray." One day suddenly he sent for them through Dīnabandhu Dāsa

¹¹ Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇava Jīvana, pp 43-44

¹² Spiritual wealth.

¹³ Repetition of *mantra*.

and said. "Mahāprabhu asked me yesterday to give you *dikṣā*." He gave them *mantra* and said, "You should not think that I have anything to do with your *dikṣā*. Think that it is Mahāprabhu. Who has blessed you with the *mantra*."

On Harendra Kumāra's inquiring about *Guru-pranāli*¹⁴ he said "There are infinite forms of Śrī Bhagavān and His *līlā*. One cannot know them by imagination. When the Name is constantly repeated, Śrī Bhagavān and His *līlā* automatically manifest Themselves out of the Name. The Name also inspires in the heart of the *sādhaka* the *sevā* (service) he has to perform in *līlā*."

Śrī Gaurakīśora Dāsa Bābājī did not have the concert of a guru even in respect of his disciples. He told them that their real sheet anchor was the Name of the Lord and they must whole-heartedly surrender themselves to the Name. This is apparent from the following letter he once wrote to Harendra Kumāra

Śrī Rādhāmadanagopāla Jayat

Navadvīpa-Rānighāṭa

1318/16 Caitra

You are all¹⁵ the servants of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Your servant am I. You have given me the name Gaurakīśora Dāsa. You should take care that this name is not disgraced.¹⁶ Mahāprabhu has given you the Name "Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya" and the *mantra* containing sixteen

¹⁴ The guru gives *guru-pranāli* to a *sādhaka* of *aṣṭayāma-līlā-smarana* in which the *līlā* of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, as it goes on during the eight parts of the day, is contemplated. The *guru-pranāli* includes a description of the transcendental body of his *sādhaka*, his guru and guru's guru, etc. and their *sevā* in *līlā*.

¹⁵ The reference is to his disciples.

¹⁶ The implication is that they should not do anything by which the guru is disgraced.

names and thirty-two letters. You should write both in big letters and keep them before you and do *japa* while looking at them. You should not look at or think of anything belonging to the world of *Māyā*. The letters of the *Nāma-mantra* have such *śakti* (power) that if you continue to do *japa* while looking at them, you will one day have the *darśana* of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa with Their *parikaras* (companions). As for company, amongst the householders you should keep the company of Śrī Naroṭhāma Ṭhākura amongst the *vairāgī* Vaiṣnavas the company of the Eight-Gosvāmīs. The Eight-Gosvāmīs are Rūpa, Sanātāna, Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa, Raghunātha Dāsa, Śrī Jīva, Gopāla Bhaṭṭa, Lokanātha Gosvāmī and Kṛṣṇa Dāsa Gosvāmī.¹⁷ You should do *Sādhanā-Bhakti* along the lines they have done.

Your servant,

Gaurakīśora Dāsa

Bābā had his own way of celebrating the anniversaries of the Gosvāmīs. Once, a day before the disappearance day of Sanātāna Gosvāmī he said to a devotee living with him, "Tomorrow we shall celebrate the anniversary of Sanātāna Gosvāmī." The devotee said, "Where shall we find the wherewithal?" He replied, "We shall not ask for anything from anyone. We shall eat only once and do *bhajana* throughout the day."

Bābā did not accept *prasāda*¹⁸ from everyone. Once a certain person offered sweets to Mahāprabhu and insisted on Bābā accepting the same. Bābā said, "Mahāprabhu does

¹⁷ This means that one should read their works and walk on their footsteps.

¹⁸ Food offered to the deity.

not accept the *bhoga*¹⁹ offered by a person, who eats fish, commits adultery or offers *bhoga* to Him for the fulfillment of some desire."

Bābā was always cautious against Māyā and its various subtle forms and advised others to be cautious. Once Bābā had offered boiled rice to Mahāprabhu and kept it in an earthen pot. A snake happened to crawl past the pot. A woman saw it from a distance. When Bābā sat down to eat *prasāda*, the woman came to him and began to tell him about the snake. He said, "You go away from here. I shall take *prasāda* after you have gone." When she had gone he exclaimed, "Oh! How subtle and multifaced is Māyā! Expression of sympathy is also one of the subtle ways in which it tries to penetrate."

Once a doctor who practised *bhajana* expressed his desire to settle down in Navadvīpa and offer his services to all and sundry free of charge. Bābā advised, "If you want to live in Navadvīpa, do not offer free service to the people given to sense enjoyment. If you do you will only abet their sensuousness. You should serve only those who are engaged in *bhajana*. Any other kind of service means playing into the hands of Māyā."

Bābā left this world to join the eternal *līlā* of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa on the Utthāna Ekādaśī of the month of Kārtika in 1915.

¹⁹ Food for the deity before it is offered.

CHAPTER III

ŚRĪ KṚṢṆA SUNDARA RĀYA (RĀYA PRABHU)

(Pābanā)

Śrī Kṛṣṇa Sundara Rāya was the son of Śrī Rasikamohana Rāya of village Udhuniyā in district Pābanā. He held some high office in state Kāknā. But he realized the transient character of the world and became indifferent to it. He took initiation from Śrī Vairāṅkya Gosvāmī, a descendant of Advaitācārya and began to do *bhajana*. His *bhajana* consisted mainly of *Nāma-kīrtana* and *līlā-kīrtana*. He became *siddha* through *kīrtana*.

During his *kīrtana* his only son Śyāmasundara used to play on *mṛdaṅga*. Śyāmasundara died suddenly. Rāya Prabhu shed no tears on his death. On returning from the cremation ground after cremation, he sat down to perform *kīrtana*, playing himself on *mṛdaṅga*. When people came for condolence, they were surprised to see him playing on *mṛdaṅga*. They stood aghast and did not know what to say. Rāya Prabhu said casually, "Mahāprabhu had given me a *mṛdaṅga* player. He has taken him away. What can I do?"

There are numerous examples of the *siddha* state of Rāya Prabhu. Once at the insistence of Banamālī Rāya, the Rājā of Taḍāsa, he went to stay with him for sometime

in Banavārī Nagara He realized that there was some impurity in Banamālī Rāya's heart In order to remove the impurity he pretended to take leave of him and said, "Banamālī! Now I take leave of you Before taking leave let me embrace you once." As he embraced him, his impurity was gone. Horripilation appeared on his body and tears began to flow from his eyes. He said with a voice choked with emotion, "Prabhu! Do not go. Stay here for some more time and shower your mercy upon this fallen soul!" He stayed on for some more time

A Brahmin suffered from acute stomach-ache. All kinds of treatment failed to cure him. At last he went to Vaidyanātha Dhāma and lay before the temple of Lord Śiva for a number of days without taking food or water and praying all the time for mercy Śiva said to him in a dream, "You go to Udhuniyā, where lives a *sādhu*, named Kṛṣṇa Sundara Rāya He will cure you." He went to Rāya Prabhu and told him about his ailment and the command of Śiva Rāya Prabhu said, "You rub in your body the dust of the place, where *kīrtana* is performed on Ekādaśī Chant *Harināma* and observe fast on Ekādaśī Your disease will be cured" He did the same and was cured

In Udhuniyā Hātakhola there lived a prostitute, whose name was Sahacarī She had wounds all over her body. No treatment was of any avail. She went to Rāya Prabhu and spoke to him about her plight. He said, "Give up prostitution. Leave the place where prostitutes live Here in this courtyard *kīrtana* is performed on Ekādaśī Sweep the courtyard everyday and rub its dust on your body." She also did likewise and was cured.

In Udhuniyā there lived a fisherman. He was so unfortunate that whenever he went on fishing no fish was caught. He became a debtor The debt went on increasing. The money lender stopped giving him debt. He went to Rāya Prabhu and said, "Prabhu! I am so unfortunate that wherever I spread my net to catch fish, no fish is caught. What should I do?"

Rāya Prabhu said, "Mahāprabhu does not want that you should do the work of fisherman."

"If I don't, how will I maintain myself and my family?"

"You chant *Harināma* Mahāprabhu will look after your family."

The fisherman gave up fishing. He took initiation in *Harināma* from Rāya Prabhu and began to chant. People began to call him *Vaikuṇṭha-Bhakta* Vaikuṇṭha-Bhakta started living on alms. Whenever he went to any house and said, 'Rādhā Govinda' he got *bhikṣā* in sufficient quantity Rājara Banamālī Rāya was pleased with his Bhakti and paid off his debts. With the blessing of Rāya Prabhu, Vaikuṇṭha-Bhakta never had to do any fishing.

Śrī Śaśibhūṣana, the landlord of Cakahangālī had heard that Rāya Prabhu was a *Siddha Mahātmā* He went to him with the purpose of testing his power as a *Siddha Puruṣa* He was at that time engaged in conversation with some devotee Śaśibhūṣana sat down and began to watch everything with a critical eye. While he was watching a frog came hopping and sat down under a stand for water-pitcher A poisonous snake came after it Everyone ran away to see the snake. But Rāya Prabhu remained sitting. He caught the snake by its tail and said to the frog, "Do not fear. Go away fearlessly."

The frog went. The snake remained lying there like one that was dead. Rāya Prabhu said to his grandson, "Gaur! Go in and bring some milk and banana" Gaura brought some milk and banana in a bowl. Rāya Prabhu placed the bowl before the snake and said, "Eat, since I have deprived you of your prey." The snake started eating. After eating it again remained lying there still and motionless. Rāya Prabhu continued talking with the devotees. After the talks were over he looked at the snake and said, "Oh! You are still lying here. Now go to your place." The snake crawled away. Śaśibhuṣaṇa Bābū thought that perhaps Rāya Prabhu had come to know his mind and it was to satisfy him that he had shown that *līlā*. Since then he gave up his sceptical attitude and began to believe in God and His devotees.

For a long time Rāya Prabhu lived in the house of Banamālī Rāya. On Ekādaśī he used to perform *kīrtana* with a group of devotees. On the Kṛṣṇa Ekādaśī day in the month of Vaisākha in 1893 the devotees arrived late for *kīrtana*. He said to them, "Now you will not have to come for *kīrtana* on Ekādaśī. You can always make merry with your wife and children." The devotees could not understand why Rāya Prabhu said like that.

Two days later on Trayodaśī Rāya Prabhu read *Caitanya Caritāmṛtā* before the devotees. The topic was the deliverance of Jagāi-Mādhāi. After the reading he said, "Alas! Mahāprabhu has not yet delivered a sinner like me!" The devotees went to their homes. Rāya Prabhu took *prasāda* at night and lay down on the bed. He slept for a while. Then he got up. He called his grandson and said, "Gaur! Go and call all the devotees. Let them perform *kīrtana*. For the time of my departure has come."

Gaura brought the devotees. But on hearing from

Gaura about Rāya Prabhu's departure they stood perturbed and forgot about *kīrtana*. Rāya Prabhu said indignantly, "Oh! No one is kind to me!" He then started doing *japa*. On his gesticulation the devotees carried him before Rādhāvinoda, the deity of Banamālī Rāya. While doing *japa* before Rādhāvinoda his legs became cold. Slowly the rest of his body also became cold and white. But his tongue continued to move in *japa*. *Samkīrtana* began. At about 2 A.M. he left the world midst *Samkīrtana* and entered the celestial Vrajadhāma, to serve Rādhāvinoda.

How intimate was Rāya Prabhu with Rādhāvinoda, we come to know from an episode that took place after he had passed away. The episode is like this. Kāminī Bābū often used to go to Banavāri Nagara for the *darśana* of Rādhāvinoda and Rāya Prabhu. Once when he went there, he was surprised to see a *hukkā* with a long pipe placed before Rādhāvinoda. He enquired from Banamālī Rāya about the mystery of the *hukkā*. He said, "On the last Amāvasyā day when I went for the *darśana* of Rādhāvinoda, the *pujārī* said, 'Today after offering *bhoga* to Rādhāvinoda, I was sitting before Him and doing *japa*. I napped for a while. During the nap I heard Vinodajī saying, 'Get the *hukkā*. These people have stopped My *hukkā*. I used to go and smoke elsewhere. For the last four days I have not been offered *hukkā* even there.'"

Even then Kāminī Bābū could not understand the mystery. Then Banamālī Rāya said, "You see, the story goes back to the time, when my father brought Rādhāvinoda, from another devotee, who used to serve Him with great devotion. The devotee used to smoke *hukkā*. Before he smoked, he offered it to Rādhāvinoda. Therefore

Rādhāvinoda also got into the habit of smoking *hukkā*. When He came to us, His *hukkā* came with Him and the service of *hukkā* continued. After the death of my father I discontinued the service, because I thought that it was not according to the *śāstras*. Then He began to go to Rāya Prabhu and smoke with him. Rāya Prabhu used to smoke *hukkā*. He practised Rāgānugā Bhakti, in which the guiding principle is love, not the rules and regulations of the *śāstras*. He used to be always drowned in the *līlā* of Rādhāvinoda. He knew that Rādhāvinoda loved to smoke *hukkā*. So he thought Rādhāvinoda would be a good companion while smoking and began to offer *hukkā* to Him, before he smoked himself. After the passing away of Rāya Prabhu, Rādhāvinoda had to go without *hukkā* for four days. Therefore He asked the *pujārī* to provide Him with *hukkā*. I brought out the *hukkā* and arranged for His *hukkā* service both morning and evening after *Rāja-bhoga*."

CHAPTER IV

ŚRĪ CAITANYA DĀSA BĀBĀJĪ

(Navadvīpa)

The Rājās of Kṛṣṇanagara had been hostile to Vaiṣṇavas. Rājā Girīśandra was also hostile to them. He did not believe that Mahāprabhu was an incarnation. He once called a big meeting of panditas in Navadvīpa. The meeting had to decide whether Mahāprabhu was an incarnation or not. Śrī Vrajanātha Vidyāratna was the principal speaker to speak on behalf of those who believed that Mahāprabhu was an incarnation. Bhuvanamohana Vidyāratna was the principal speaker on behalf of those who were opposed to it. The wordy battle lasted for two days. Heaps of books were produced from either side in support of its view. But no decision could be taken. Then Śrī Vrajanātha Vidyāratna requested Rājā Girīśandra to invite Siddha Śrī Caitanya Dāsa Bābājī to the meeting. Siddha Bābā was brought there. The Rājā asked him, "What is the proof of Mahāprabhu's being an incarnation?" He remembered Mahāprabhu for a while, then said, "I also doubted the divinity of Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu like you. I was not able to decide whether He was God or a devotee. But today my doubt is removed. Now I believe firmly that Mahāprabhu is Bhagavān and I owe this belief to you. The *śāstras* have said that whenever Bhagavān has incarnated on earth, the Rājās of His time have

been hostile to Him. In the Tretā-Yuga Rājā Rāvaṇa was hostile to Rāma, in Dvāpara Rājā Kansa was hostile to Kṛṣṇa. In Kali-Yuga Bhagavān incarnated as Gaurāṅga in Navadvīpa Rājā Kṛṣṇacandra of Navadvīpa and yourself, his descendant, have proved that He is Bhagavān by being hostile to Him in this Yuga. You have given me great pleasure by removing my doubt. Therefore I bow down to you with reverence." The Rājā was happy to hear this and expressed agreement with what Bābā had said. The panditas began to shout, "*Caitanya Dāsa Bābā kī Jaya!*"

Śrī Caitanya Dāsa Bābā was born in village Bhāḍara of Mayamansinha district. He was named Jagabandhu. His father Vaidyanātha and mother died in his infancy and he was brought up by his uncle Gauranātha. At the age of seven he was attacked by severe cholera. Gauranātha gave him the *caranāmṛta* of his family deity Madanagopāla and he was cured. Since then he developed great faith in Thākura and His *prasāda*. *Sātvika bhāvas* began to appear on his body in *kīrtana* and at the time of reading *Caitanya Caritāmṛta*.

Gauranātha apprehended on account of his *bhāva* and *vairāgya* that he might renounce the world. Therefore he started negotiations for his marriage. When Jagabandhu came to know about that, he sneaked out of home at night and went to Navadvīpa. He took *veśa* (*Varṣnava Sannyāsa*) from some *Mahātmā*¹ and was named Caitanya Dāsa.

Śrī Caitanya Dāsa Bābā lived in a secluded room

¹ Some think that Caitanya Dāsa Bābā's *sikṣā-guru* was Śrī Utsavānanda Gosvāmī, a descendant of Advaitācārya and *veśa-guru* was Śrī Śyāmananda.

in the temple of Mahāprabhu in Navadvīpa. He always chanted '*Gorā! Gorā!*'² and remained divinely inspired. He slept only one or two hours at night. Even while he was asleep the sound '*Gorā! Gorā!*' could be heard coming out of his breath. Every day he worshipped a book in which he had written in beautiful letters the name '*Gorā*' a hundred thousand times.

Śrī Caitanya Dāsa's mode of worship was according to *Nadiyā-Nagari-bhāva*³. He often dressed himself like a lady, looked lovingly at Gaura and sang.

"My Lord! My Love!

I have surrendered to Thee

My life, my soul, my honour and all

To Thy lotus feet am I tied

By chain of love

I pray that life after life

Thy consort may I be."

As he sang tears incessantly flowed from his eyes. After some time he went to the door of the temple. Looking at Gaura through the veil he said in a sweet voice "Darling! What will You eat today?" He waited for the answer, then went to the kitchen and told the *Gosvāminis*⁴ about the details of the menu. Gaura wanted to have prepared. They cooked accordingly. The service of Mahāprabhu in the temple, during those days was conducted according to the instructions of Caitanya Dāsa Bābājī.

² Nickname of Mahāprabhu.

³ In *Nadiyā-Nagari-bhāva* the *sādhaka* has the concept of a lady of Nadiyā, who is in love with Gaurāṅga as *Nadiyā-nāgara* or a citizen of Nadiyā whose attraction for the ladies of Nadiyā is immense. Śrī Narahan Sarakāra, a companion of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu had *Nadiyā-Nagari-bhāva* towards Him.

⁴ Wives of the Gosvāminis.

Bābā was the very figure of humility. Though a great pandita, he bowed down even to animals, because he thought that the Lord resided in them. His only possessions were an old *kanthā* and an earthen *kamandalu*. His power of tolerance also was great. He always tolerated even the worst behavior against him.

One day after his bath in the Ganges, he was changing the *kopina*.⁵ A strong wind was blowing. It was difficult to prevent the *kopina* from flying. It flew and the ladies bathing at the *ghāṭa* turned their faces in shame. At that time Jagadīśa Maitra, a man of wrathful temperament, who was inimical towards Vaiṣṇavas, happened to be there. He said to Bābā angrily, "Rascal, you became naked before the ladies! Get away from here or I shall give you a good thrashing." Bābā blamed the wind, but promised politely to be careful in the future. Jagadīśa Maitra got wild and said, "The villain does not own his fault and blames the wind," and slapped him. Men and women at the *ghāṭa* were painfully hurt to see this. But Bābā said with folded hands, "Prahu! You have meted out the right punishment and given me the right advice. You are my guru. I will never commit this kind of offence again. Pardon me."

Three days after this Jagadīśa Maitra had very high fever. He began to rave in delirium, "Bābā Mahārāja! Pardon me for my offence." But every time he raved like this, he saw Bābā standing before him with folded hands and begging for pardon. At the end he became unconscious. Then his relatives went to Bābā and requested him for pardon on his behalf. Bābā gave them the *tulasī* leaf offered at the feet of Gaura and said, "you give

⁵ A small piece of cloth worn over the privates.

this to him to eat. This will cure him." As soon as Jagadīśa ate the leaf, his fever was cured and his animosity against the Vaiṣṇavas also disappeared. He surrendered himself at the feet of Gaura for ever.

Bhīma was another wicked and ferocious person, who lived in Navadvīpa. He was also inimical towards Vaiṣṇavas. He heard that at dead of night Caitanya Dāsa Bābā indulged in amorous talks with Gaura. He did not believe. One night he jumped over the boundary wall of the temple and stood by the side of Bābā's room. From what he heard he suspected that Bābā was conversing with some woman. He broke the door open. On entering the room he was surprised to see Bābā absorbed in deep meditation and to find the room filled with astonishingly sweet smell of flowers. He was shocked. He fell senseless on the ground. On regaining consciousness he saw Bābā still sitting in meditation without any consciousness of the external world. He quietly came out of the room. After passing several days in self reproach and penitence, he again went to Bābā and begged for pardon. Bābā not only pardoned, he embraced him and said, "Bhīma! You are Gaura Dāsa' from today. Do *Harināma* and the service of the Vaiṣṇavas." Bhīma became a Vaiṣṇava.

It is obvious from what has been said above that Bābā was a *Siddha Mahāpuruṣa*. He saw Mahāprabhu, Himself in the Śrī Vighraha of Mahāprabhu and conversed with Him. One day his behavior in the midst of a large gathering of Vaiṣṇavas convinced everybody of this. There was some festival in the temple. Many Vaiṣṇavas had gathered. A group of them was to perform *kīrtana*. They started by singing '*Nadīyā chāḍiyā gelo Gaurasundara*—Gaura went away from Nadīyā.' Bābā

could not tolerate this. In a fit of anger he ran towards the *kirtaniyas*⁶ with a staff in hand and said "If again you say like this, I shall beat and turn you out of the temple. Don't you see Gauracandra, the life of our life, the full moon of Nadyā, standing before us and radiating light in the temple?" They had to stop that *kirtana* and sing another.

Once, when Caitanya Dāsa Bābājī was too old, he went to Śrīkhaṇḍa, where Narahan Sarakāra Ṭhākura used to live. He also went to the temple of Śrī Gaura- Viṣṇupriya in Śrīkhaṇḍa. Apart from his old age he was at that time suffering from fever. Therefore two persons were holding him from either side. Suddenly he forcibly entered the temple and closed the door from inside. At that time the two persons, who were holding him, felt that he was too powerful for them. They could not hold him. He remained in the temple for more than an hour. No one knows what he did inside the temple. When he came out his face was radiant and there was a smile on his face. From his eyes it appeared that he was swimming in the ocean of love. A large number of people had gathered outside the temple. Among them was Śrī Sarvānanda Ṭhākura, whom he respected like his guru. He made obeisance to Bābā. Bābā placed his foot over his head. Everyone was surprised to see him do this. Sarvānanda Ṭhākura's body swelled on account of horripilation and tears began to flow from his eyes. He also began to feel that he was swimming in love.

Once Bābā gave *dikṣā* to a cobbler. He named him Viṣṇupriyāvallabha Dāsa. The cobbler began to live

⁶ People performing *kirtana*

on the bank of the Ganges and do *bhajana*. The Gosvāmīs of Navadvīpa held Bābā guilty of violating the *śāstras*. They excommunicated him from the Vaiṣṇava community. The same night Mahāprabhu said to the Gosvāmīs in a dream, "Bābā is a *Siddha Mahātmā*. He has not done any wrong by imitating the cobbler." After this all the Gosvāmīs of Navadvīpa, including those who criticized his *Nadyā-nāgarī-bhāva* began to hold him in high esteem.

Siddha Mahātmās do not generally make a show of their supernatural powers. But Caitanya Dāsa Bābājī had to do this, when compelled by some special *bhāva* or circumstances.

Once the Gosvāmī boys sought Bābā's permission to pluck a bee-hive in the courtyard of the temple. Bābā permitted. When the hive was squeezed, about three and a half Kilos of honey came out of it. After it was offered to the deity everyone took some *prasāda*. One does not know what *bhāva* animated Bābājī to say, "Today I shall take the *adharāmṛta*⁷ of my *Prānavallabha*⁸ to my hearts content." He cupped his hands and Pyārīlāla Gosvāmī began to pour honey into his *aṅguli*⁹. He continued to do so till Bābā had swallowed the entire honey, which must have been about three Kilos. Everyone was surprised.

When Pyārīlāla Gosvāmī's father and the other elderly Gosvāmīs came to know about this, they were filled with anxiety regarding Bābā's health and began to reprimand the boys. But next morning they were

⁷ *Prasāda*

⁸ Master of my life and soul or husband.

⁹ Cupped hands.

surprised to see Bābā doing *japa* as usual

Once more the people of Navadvīpa had the occasion to see the supernatural power of Bābā. One day a ship carrying English soldiers from Calcutta to Murshidabād anchored for a while at Navadvīpa near the *ghāta*, on which the Bengali ladies were bathing. The ladies began to flee. Two soldiers pursued them. At that time Caitanya Dāsa Bābā was bathing at the *ghāta*. The ladies took shelter under him. Bābā trembled with rage and muttering, one knows not what, he sprinkled a few drops of water on the soldiers. Immediately their vision was clouded with darkness. They somehow made their way to the ship groping and staggering. Bābā said, "Rascals! Don't you know that the ladies of Nadiyā are devoted to my Prāṇavallabha. How can you touch them?"

Once in the afternoon, when Bābā was half asleep and dreaming, he said to the Gosvāmīs of the temple, "My Prāṇavallabha is calling me. You are all His own. Bid farewell to me cheerfully." The Gosvāmīs did not attach any importance to the dream. Bābā attended the *ārati* in the evening as usual and went and lay down in his room. At that time he was slowly chanting the Name. Tears were coursing down his eyes, and from time to time he shrieked out 'Ha! Prāṇanātha! Ha Viṣṇupriyā-prāṇavallabha! If anyone asked why he shrieked, he replied "I am suffering the pangs of separation from my Prāṇavallabha. I cannot bear it any more." The news spread all round that Bābā was about to leave the world. Crowds of people, including the panditas, the Gosvāmīs, and the gents and ladies of respectable families of Navadvīpa poured in to witness the parting of Bābā. Bābā told them, "Today I am getting set for

departure. Tomorrow I shall reach Prāṇavallabha." The whole night passed like this. Many people went back home. In the morning Bābā got up from his bed. He had the *japa-mālā*¹⁰ in his hand and was saying, 'Ha Viṣṇupriyāvallabha! Ha Gaurāṅga!' and tears were flowing from his eyes. He said to whomsoever he saw, "My Prāṇavallabha is calling me. Take me to Him." The Gosvāmīs of the temple took him to the hall in front of the Śrī Vighraha of Mahāprabhu and made him sit on a cot. Bābā looked at Mahāprabhu and started talking with Him. About six hours passed like this. A large crowd gathered. The foremost *vaidyā*¹¹ of Navadvīpa also came. He examined the pulse of Bābā and said, "I do not see any sign of death." The people started going round Bābā and singing *kīrtana*. Bābā started singing in soft and sweet tones the following song composed by him.

"*Adieu bhajana, adieu sādhanā!*

Now Gaura is my groom.

I am His bride"¹²

He asked others also to sing that song.

Looking constantly at the Śrī Vighraha and singing the above song, Bābā left his body to meet his Prāṇavallabha and ever be with Him.

According to Bābā's own wish his body was cremated on the bank of Ganges. The Gosvāmīs brought the bones to the temple of Mahāprabhu and built his *Pūṣpa-samādhi* within the precincts of the

¹⁰ The bag of rosary

¹¹ Physician

¹² *āmāra bhajana h'le sārā, sādhanā h'le sārā/
gaurera kāntā āmi kāntā āmāra gorā//*

temple Part of the bones were carried by Śrī Vṇḍāvanacandra Gosvāmī to Vṇḍāvana and a *samādhi* was built there

In Vṇḍāvana lived Śrī Gaura Śiromaṇi, a disciple of Caitanya Dāsa Bābā Bābā told him in a dream at night on the very day of his disappearance, "Look, I have come to Vṇḍāvana." The next morning as soon as he opened the door of his *kuti*, he saw the dazzlingly resplendent figure of Bābā standing before him and became unconscious.

CHAPTER V

ŚRĪ BHAGAVĀN DĀSA BĀBĀJĪ

(Kālanā)

It is said that it is not possible even for the wisest to understand the behaviour of *Siddha Mahātmās*. The life and behaviour of Siddha Śrī Bhagavān Dāsa Bābājī is a notable example of this. He was a disciple of Siddha Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābā of Govardhana. He belonged to Orissa, but lived in Kālanā and worshipped *Nāma-brahma*¹ *Nāma-brahma* installed by him is worshipped in Kālanā even today.

It appeared from his behavior that he always lived in the transcendental world of *Kṛṣṇa-līlā*. Therefore even while talking to someone he sometimes laughed without any cause for laughter. The cause used to be in the stream of *līlā* that always flowed in his heart.

He looked at everything of this world as pertaining in some way to the transcendental world, in which he lived. One day a devotee saw a snake in his *āśrama*. He caught and threw it away. When Bābā came to know about it, he became angry. He said to the devotees, "Don't you know that the snake is the elder brother of my *Nāma-brahma*?² You have ill treated him. You

¹ The Name of Kṛṣṇa inscribed on a metallic plate.

² *Nāma-brahma* is no other than Kṛṣṇa. The elder brother of Kṛṣṇa (see next page.)

must not come to the *āśrama* again." For a long time Bābā remained displeased with him. The snake used to come everyday to take Ṭhākura's *prasāda*. The *prasāda* used to lie before Bābā until the snake ate part of it. He ate the snakes *mahāprasāda* after he had eaten.

Apart from the snake a *biḷāo* (he-cat) also lived in the *āśrama*. He must also have been in some way related to Bābā's *Nāma-brahma*, because he used to dine with him. Bābā's time for eating was not certain, because of his absorption in *bhajana*. When Bābā wanted to eat much later than usual, the *biḷāo* came and moved round him meowing all the time to indicate that he was hungry. Bābā then removed the cover of the *prasāda* so that he might eat. He covered it again after he had eaten.

Sometimes Bābā did not want to eat because he did not feel inspired in *bhajana*. He told his disciples, "I will not eat today, because I am unwell." The disciples knew why Bābā did not want to eat. They said, "Bābā! If you do not eat, we shall also not eat." Bābā replied, "Very well. Let us not eat. Let us all go to sleep." At last the disciples had to eat, because Bābā sometimes did not eat for two or three days. He ate only when he got proper inspiration and was blessed with the *darśana* of *Kṛṣṇa-līlā*. Bābā felt hungry only when he felt inspired in *bhajana*.

Different kinds of waves of *bhāva* often attacked

(from previous page.)

is Balarāma or Mahāśaṅkarāṇa. Śeṣa is a part or incarnation of Balarāma. For Bābā the snake is a manifestation of Śeṣa, the serpent with a thousand hoods that supports the earth according to the *Purāṇas*.

the heart of Bābā. He used to be so possessed by the wave that his behaviour was completely governed by it. Although the disciples did not understand his *bhāva*, they were compelled to create situations to suit his behaviour. Once a strange wave swept his mind. He thought of building a pond near *Nāma-brahma* and doing *bhajana* on a *macāna*³ in the pond. He said to his disciple Prāṇakṛṣṇa Dāsa, "Dig a pond near *Nāma-brahma* tomorrow."

During those days the wages of a labourer were two annas per day. Prāṇakṛṣṇa Dāsa engaged 50 labourers and got his pond dug the next day. Bābā's heart danced with joy to see the pond. He asked his disciple Jagadīśa Dāsa to bring bamboos on his own shoulders for making a *macāna*. Jagadīśa Dāsa brought bamboos and got the *macāna* built. Bābā began to do *bhajana* on the *macāna*. After a few days by chance a calf fell into the pond. Bābā was very much hurt at heart to see this. He had the calf taken out of the pond and ordered that the pond be filled up.

Once the *pujārī* of *Nāma-brahma* stole the ornaments of *Nāma-brahma* and fled. The inmates of the *āśrama* wanted to report the theft to the police. Bābā said, "*Nāma-brahma* does not want to wear ornaments. Therefore He has given them away to the *pujārī*. Let Him remain without ornaments." After a few days the *pujārī* came back with the ornaments. He fell at Bābā's feet and said, "Bābā! I had stolen the ornaments out of greed. But when I wanted to sell them, I began to feel very uneasy at heart. Therefore I have brought

³ A stand made of bamboos with a seat at the top well above ground or water for a man or men to sit on.

them back. Kindly forgive me for my offence." Then Bābā said to his disciples, "*Nāma-brahma* has again desired to wear ornaments. Therefore He has managed to get them back. How childish! He does not take a trice to change His mind. He is now like this, now like that Go, adorn Him again with the ornaments." He engaged the *pujāri* again for the service of *Nāma-brahma*. For him it was not the *pujāri*, who was at fault, but *Nāma-brahma*.

Bābā did not like that his disciples should pray to Bhagavān for the fulfilment of any worldly desire. Once his disciple Viṣṇudāsa got fever. Fever continued for a number of days. Bābā said to him, "Viṣṇudāsa, take some medicine." Viṣṇudāsa said, "*Nāma-brahma* will be merciful and I shall be allright." Bābā said, "Yes, why not? You are such a *Siddha Mahātmā* that *Nāma-brahma* will turn a doctor for you. When you fall ill, you should take medicine. It is not good to trouble *Nāma-brahma* for your sake."

A special characteristic of Bābā was that he did not ask his disciples to meditate on *Kṛṣṇa-līlā*, but made *Kṛṣṇa-līlā* appear in their hearts by infusing Bhakti in them.

CHAPTER VI

ŚRĪ VIJAYA KṚṢṆA GOSVĀMĪ

(Śāntipur)

The story of Śrī Vijaya Kṛṣṇa Gosvāmī is connected with his family deity Śrī Rādhāśyāmasundara. It is said that the *Śrīmūrti* of Rādhāśyāmasundara was installed by Śrī Devakīnandana Gosvāmī, the grandson of Śrī Advaitācārya Prabhu, who is regarded like Nityānanda Prabhu as non-different from Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and the work of *purohita*¹ in the installation ceremony was done by Advaitācārya Himself. It is natural that the *Śrīmūrti* installed by Advaitācārya, whose calls had brought down Śrī Kṛṣṇa from Goloka to earth in the form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, should have been fully alive and sportive or *līlāmāyā*². From the time of Devakīnandana Śyāmasundara had been worshipped as the family deity by his descendants and had been playing the dual through contradictory roles of the protector and protected. He has been to them their friend, philosopher and guide, as also their sweet and loving child, Who stood in need of their protection and service.

In this family in the ninth generation from Advaitācārya was born Mahābhāgavata³ Śrī Ānandacandra

¹ Priest

² Habitual in his performance of various kinds of *līlā* (sports).

³ A great devotee.

Gosvāmī Śyāmasundara was his life and soul. He served Him with great devotion and piety. He took care even to wash the wood with which he prepared *bhoga* for Him. The service of the *sādhū* and Vaiṣṇavas was an essential part of his daily life. He did not take *prasāda* without serving the Vaiṣṇavas. Sometimes a much larger number of Vaiṣṇavas than expected came for *prasāda*. On such occasions Śyāmasundara saw to it that everyone was satisfactorily fed out of the food that was cooked.

Ānandacandra Gosvāmī was famous as a *pathaka* ⁴ of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. He regarded *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* as non-different from Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Therefore as soon as he touched the *Bhāgavatam* at the time of *pāṭha*,⁵ *sattvika bhāvas* appeared all over his body. Once on the *Holi* day he was reading *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, when a disciple came and gave him some *gulāla* ⁶ for Śyāmasundara. Immediately he sprinkled it over *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. The disciple was unhappy to see that. But when he went to see Śyāmasundara, he was surprised to see the same *gulāla* sprinkled over Him.

On Akṣaya Tṛtīyā day while reading *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* Ānandacandra went into eternal *samādhi* and joined the eternal *līlā* of Śyāmasundara in celestial Vṇḍāvāna. Even today the people of Śāntīpur remember him as 'Rṣi Gosvāmī.'

Once Rāmakṛṣṇa, the famous saint of Dakṣiṇeśvara, said to Vijaya Kṛṣṇa, "I have heard about a Gosvāmī of Śāntīpur that while reading *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* he

⁴ Reader.

⁵ Reading.

⁶ Red powder which Hindus sprinkle over one another during *Holi* festival.

had such horrifilation that blood oozed out of every pore of his body and his roar was so loud that it could be heard from a long distance."

Vijaya Kṛṣṇa replied, "He was no other than my father."

Upon hearing this Rāmakṛṣṇa remarked, "It is only a father like him, who could give birth to a son like you."

Vijaya Kṛṣṇa was born in 1841. Even while he was a child it began to appear that he had intimate relationship with Śyāmasundara since his previous birth. He felt very much attracted by Him and looked at Him attentively. Whenever he wept he was taken before Him. As soon as he saw Him he stopped weeping. When he began to crawl on his knees, a strict watch had to be kept on him, because whenever he found an opportunity he ran towards the temple and tried to catch Śyāmasundara. When he learned to speak he insisted on serving and adorning Him with his own hands. When not permitted to do so he wanted himself be adorned like Him and when adorned he went happily and stood before Him so that He might see him. When he learned to walk he wanted to go out and play with Him. Once in a state of trance he was heard saying to Him, "You have run away with my ball. Tomorrow when You go out to play. You will see how I avenge." That day he did not eat in anger, because he was not allowed to go to the temple to fight with Śyāmasundara. The next day when the entrancement was over people asked him about the episode. he said he did not know anything about it.

When Ānandacandra Gosvāmī read *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* Vijaya went and sat before him and listened

to the *pāṭha* attentively. It appeared as if Śukadeva was reading and Parikṣit was listening.

Everything about the child Vijaya was extraordinary. Whatever he said about someone's future came true. People thought that it was some god, who possessed him and spoke through him.

Vijaya could not tolerate injustice or harassment done to anyone. Once a landlord of Śāntipur wanted to punish one of his tenants for some minor fault of his. He asked one of his servants to push a bamboo into his anus. This was too inhuman and tyrannical for Vijaya to tolerate. As the servant was going to do this, he came rushing forward before the landlord and trembling with rage vituperated, "You tyrant! Demon! Rascal!" and fell senseless on the ground. The landlord was surprised to see the courage and indignation of the child. He felt ashamed and let off the tenant.

Vijaya started his education under the tutelage of the great Ācārya Śrī Bhagavān Pandita. His intelligence was so sharp and memory so powerful that he grasped quickly whatever he was taught and stored in his memory for ever whatever he read or heard. He stood first in every examination. As he advanced in age, two important traits of his character—his religiousness and propensity for selfless social service became manifest. Every day, after his bath in the Ganges, he served Śyāmasundara with devotion, observed fast on Ekādaśī and other days on which fast was enjoined by the *śāstrās* and did everything else that a devout Hindu was required to do. He was distressed to see the condition of the society, which suffered not only on account of natural calamities like flood, famine, plague and cholera, but also on account of some evil practices that had crept into it. Therefore

he organized a band of young men, devoted to social service to fight and remove them. At the age of eighteen Vijaya Kṛṣṇa was married by his widowed mother. This did not make any difference to his religious and social activities.

Also at the age of eighteen Vijaya's education at Śāntipur was completed. For higher education he joined the Sanskrit College in Calcutta.

During those days the people of Bengal were rapidly coming under the influence of Western civilization. They were either becoming atheists or Christians. It was necessary to stop this as well as to reform the degenerated Hindu society by removing all the evils that had crept into it. Three great men Rājā Rāmamohana Roy, Mahārṣi Devendra Nātha and Keśava Sen vowed to do this. They founded 'Brāhma Samāja,' a religious sect, based entirely on the tenets of the Vedas. A strong movement for the purification of Hindu religion was thus started. Vijaya Kṛṣṇa also joined it. The leaders of Brāhma Samāja were pleased to find a powerful, pious, intelligent and energetic person like Vijaya Kṛṣṇa. They entrusted him with the responsibility of preaching the new faith. He started preaching with all the zest and energy at his command.

Also at this time Vijaya Kṛṣṇa's conscience suffered a shock which changed his life-style as a Gosvāmī and created a problem for his family. An old lady, who was irritated by his father, came and fell at his feet and said in a voice choked with emotion, "Prabhu! I am a fallen soul. Kindly deliver me from the bondage of Māyā. I can no more suffer its cruel strokes." This made him shiver. He began to think, "The lady has absolute faith in me. But do I deserve it? I am myself in the clutches

of Māyā. How can I deliver her? If I cannot, why should I undeservedly and falsely act as guru?"

From that day he ceased to perform the function of the guru, which his predecessors had been doing since the time of Advaitācārya. This created a problem for the family, because its only income was the donations it received from the disciples. To solve the problem Vijaya Kṛṣṇa thought of adopting the profession of doctor, through which he could maintain the family and also do some social service. Therefore he left the Sanskrit College and joined medical college. While studying in the medical college he continued the work of preaching the *Brāhma-dharma*. But since he could not now give much time to preaching, and there was no other powerful preacher in Brāhma Samāja, the preaching work of the Samāja suffered a great deal. It was found after some time that the Samāja was almost on the verge of extinction.

It was now the final year of Vijaya's medical studies and the final examination was soon to be held. After a few months he would have become a doctor and started practice. But for the sake of the Samāja he gave up studies and not caring for the prospects of a bright career as doctor, started preaching with redoubled energy.

But the problem of the maintenance of the family remained unsolved. At this time Devendranātha proposed some salary for the preachers of the Samāja. The proposal was vehemently opposed by Vijaya Kṛṣṇa in spite of his penury. Salary for preaching *dharma*! It was *adharmā*,⁷ he thought.

⁷ Against *dharma* or religion

Without any means of livelihood, Vijaya Kṛṣṇa now had to pass very hard days of want and destitution. It was not possible for him to arrange for two square meals a day and he had sometimes even to fast. During the days of destitution he had the full cooperation of his saintly wife Śrīmatī Yogamāyā Devī.

Very soon Vijaya Kṛṣṇa Gosvāmī began to be recognized as one of the foremost leaders of Brāhma Samāja. On Sundays many people, including Christians and Mohammadans came to participate in collective *sādhana* started by him and to attend his powerful and highly inspiring discourses. The place, where the *sādhana* and the lectures were organized, used to be so crowded that there was hardly an inch of space left. The followers of Brāhma Samāja were happy to see this. They began to say, "The people who say there is nothing substantial in Brāhma Samāja should come and see Gosvāmiji. There is not a single person like him in the Hindu Samāja." But the Hindus felt that cold water was thrown on their hope that Vijaya Kṛṣṇa would prove to be an ideal Hindu and would work for the protection of Hinduism. They were surprised to see that his religious views had undergone a total change. Vijaya Kṛṣṇa, who never took even a drop of water without worshipping Śyāmasundara had become Advaitavādī and did not now believe in the necessity of deity worship. In this connection Vijaya Kṛṣṇa Gosvāmī has himself written "After studying the Hindu *Śāstras* I became a staunch Vedāntī. I believed that all was Brahma, I too was Brahma and no worship was necessary."

Vijaya Kṛṣṇa had now almost renounced Śyāmasundara. The *līlā* of love which used to go on between him and Śyāmasundara now began to be regarded

by him as a kind of illusion. No wonder, because in Advaitism the form, attributes and the *līlā* of Brahman are regarded as products of *Māyā*. This was a period of trial for Śyāmasundara. The question was whether Śyāmasundara was also going to forget Vijaya. Was He going to watch the change that had taken place in him silently like one, who was totally unconcerned with it? Was He going to allow the seed of Bhakti that had sprouted in his heart and had been growing as a creeper, to dry and disappear? This was against the nature of Śyāmasundara. Once He caught a person, He never leaves him. It is also not the nature of the creeper of Bhakti to dry and disappear. It may temporarily be covered by something and its growth may be stunted, but it remains as it is. Even after the death of the person it remains as it was before his death. Bharatā is an example of this. He was born as a deer, because in his previous birth he had developed attachment for the fawn of a deer. But even as deer he had not forgotten his true self and his Bhakti had not diminished or disappeared.

In the case of Vijaya also, despite all that had happened, his *samsakāras* (natural disposition) for Bhakti had not altogether disappeared. He liked *samkirtana* very much. He regarded it as a powerful means for melting the heart and concentrating the mind. Therefore he thought of introducing *samkirtana* as an essential part of *sādhana* in Brāhma Samāja. In Brāhma Samāja meditation was the main part of *sādhana*. Vijaya introduced *kirtana* as collective *sādhana* on Sundays.

This brought into light his independent and revolutionary character. He began to be criticized by the Samāja. He felt disturbed by the criticism. To restore

his peace of mind he went to Śāntipur.

Though throughout this period Vijaya Kṛṣṇa had not once remembered Śyāmasundara, Śyāmasundara had not forgotten him. He continued to revive his memory of Him from time to time by means of His commands or requests of various kind. In later years Vijaya Kṛṣṇa sometimes thus described them to his disciples in a jocund mood:

"Once Śyāmasundara came to me and said, 'Look Vijaya, I want to wear a golden crown. Get Me one.'

"I said, 'I do not believe in You. Why not go and ask someone who believes. Where shall I find the money for your crown?'

"He said, 'Look, your aunt has some money in her *jhānpī*.⁸ Take that.'

"When I spoke about this to my aunt, she said, 'Vijaya! Yesterday Śyāmasundara said to me in a dream, 'Aunt! Get Me a golden *cūdā*.'⁹ 'Where shall I find the money? I do not have a single pice,' I said. He said, 'I know you can easily give forty or fifty rupees.'

"With this my aunt began to weep and say, 'Alas! I had secretly kept sixty-eight rupees in the *jhānpī*. No one knew about them.'

"She gave me the money I went to Dhākā and got the *cūdā* made. Śyāmasundara wears the same *cūdā* today.

"In the evening, when I was on the roof, Śyāmasundara peeped through the door and said, 'O Vijaya! Come and see how I look with the *cūdā*.'

"I said, 'Why should I? I do not believe in You.'

⁸ A small wicker-work box.
⁹ Crown.

"He said, 'How does it matter whether you believe or not? Is there any harm in seeing?'"

"I went near and looked at Him. I was charmed by His affectionate smile and the resplendent beauty of His face. While engaged in preaching I often went home to see my mother. Once during mid-day I was sitting in this room Śyāmasundara came to me and said, 'Look, today they gave Me food but did not give Me water'."

"Immediately I called my aunt and said, 'Aunt! Śyāmasundara says you did not serve Him water today?'"

"She said, 'Yes, Śyāmasundara did not speak to anyone else. He spoke to you, because you are a *jñāni*'."

"I said, 'Well, why not go and see?'"

"She went and saw that actually water was not served."

"In this manner, whenever the *pūjārī* made any mistake, Śyāmasundara came and spoke to me. Ever since my childhood Śyāmasundara continued to shower His mercy upon me even though I did not have full faith in Him."¹⁰

This time when Vijaya Kṛṣṇa returned home he was very unhappy and the thought of Śyāmasundara repeatedly came to his mind. Śyāmasundara thought that that was the opportune moment for Him to have His turn of gibe at him. He came and said with a smile, "O Vijaya! You do not believe in Me. Don't you?"

The sarcastic remark of Śyāmasundara brought tears in the eyes of Vijaya. He said in a voice choked with emotion, "Prabhu! If You are so merciful to me and want me to remain Your own, why did You let

¹⁰ Śrī Sitānātha Gosvāmī: *Bāleka Vijaya Kṛṣṇa*, pp. 99-101

me go astray and demolish everything like *kālā pahāḍa*."¹¹

Śyāmasundara said, "How are you concerned with that? What I have demolished, I shall reconstruct. Don't you know that what is reconstructed after demolition is better than what is demolished."

Gold is melted so that what is not gold in it is removed and it becomes pure. Śyāmasundara gave Vijaya a long rope. He made him go anywhere he liked and do what he liked. He made him a pauper and a preacher so that his *samsakāras* of *jñāna* and karma were removed and he realized that Bhagavān could be attained neither by sacrifice nor renunciation, nor by *jñāna* or karma. He could be attained only by pure Bhakti, unmixed with *jñāna* and karma.

Vijaya Kṛṣṇa Gosvāmī's *samsakāras* of *jñāna* and karma were now removed. He had realized the state of composure that *Niskāma-karma*¹² could give by acting as an ideal preacher without desiring anything for himself. He had also realized the final state that *jñāna* could give by meditating on *Nirviśeṣa Brahma*. Kuladā Brahmacārī has written that once he was requested to deliver a lecture on '*Brahma-jñāna* and *Brahmavādī*'. He started speaking and immediately went into *samādhi*, which lasted for hours.¹³

Vijaya Kṛṣṇa rejected karma and *jñāna*, because they failed to satisfy his inner self. But he still felt attracted to yoga. Śyāmasundara perhaps thought that when

¹¹ A Brahmin, who became Muslim and launched tyrannical attacks against the Hindus to demolish everything pertaining to Hindu religion and culture, He was called *Kālā Pahāḍa*, (Black Mountain).

¹² Action without any desire for one's own self.

¹³ Śrī Śrī Sadguru-saṅga, I, pp. 28-29

everything was to be demolished for reconstruction why should the last vestige of the old *samsakāra* remain undemolished. He left Vijaya Kṛṣṇa free to pursue the path of yoga.

Vijaya Kṛṣṇa began to look for a guru proficient in yoga. He went to the Himālayas and to Tibet and wandered from forest to forest. At last he met Svāmī Brahmānanda, a great saint, who had become *siddha* by practising yoga, at the top of the Ākāśagangā mountain near Gayā. He took initiation from him and began to practise yoga in a cave in Ākāśa-gangā mountain. Svāmī Brahmānanda lived in Mānasarovara. But he appeared before him when necessary to guide him in his *sādhana*.

During this period Vijaya Kṛṣṇa once went to Kāśī and took *sannyāsa* from Śrī Hariharānanda Sarasvatī with a view to renounce the world. But Brahmānanda appeared before him and said, "Give up the idea of renunciation. It is necessary that you live in the world and work for the emancipation of the fallen souls. Also you need not bother about leaving Brāhma Samajā. In due course it will itself fall off like the skin of a snake."

Vijaya Kṛṣṇa then returned to the Ākāśagangā mountain and began to practise *sādhana* as before. Brahmānanda continued to come from time to time to guide him.

Once Vijaya Kṛṣṇa expressed to Brahmānanda his doubt about the supernatural powers of a *Siddha Yogi*. Then Brahmānanda demonstrated to him *Animā-laghimā*¹⁴ and the other *siddhis* of yoga. He also entered with his subtle body into the dead body of a man lying in a nearby forest. The man came to life and stood

¹⁴ Power to become small like an atom or invisible.

before Vijaya Kṛṣṇa. Soon after Brahmānanda came out of his body and entered his own.

In due course Vijaya Kṛṣṇa also acquired all the *siddhis* of yoga. He also realized *Asamprajnāta Samādhi*, the highest stage of yoga. But this also did not satisfy him. His heart went back to Śyāmasundara. It began to yearn for His complete realization.

At this time Brahmānanda appeared before him and said, "Gosāin! You now go to Vraja and do *bhajana* in that land of Kṛṣṇa. Very soon you will realize Kṛṣṇa and His *līlā*."

Vijaya Kṛṣṇa went to Vraja and began to do *bhajana* according to *Śuddhā Bhakti*, unmixed with *jñāna*, karma or yoga. It was not necessary for him to take Vaiṣṇava *dikṣā* from anyone, because he had already received Vaiṣṇava *dikṣā* from his mother according to *Vamśa-paramparā*¹⁵. But he found the company of Siddha Śrī Gaura Kīṣora Śīromaṇi of Vṛndāvana very useful.

As Brahmānanda had predicted Vijaya Kṛṣṇa soon began to swim in the ocean of *Prema-Bhakti-rasa* and the divine *līlā* of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa began to unfold itself to him. He did not have to meditate on *līlā*. *Līlā* manifested itself to him at anytime, sometimes even while he was eating, drinking or singing. The nights also passed like this. He slept only for an hour towards the end of night.

Once he was sitting on the bank of Yamunā. His daughter Kulū was with him. Suddenly he exclaimed, "No, No! He will not drown you." Kulū said, "Bābā! What are you saying and to whom?"

¹⁵ Disciplic succession according to family tradition.

"To whom else would I say?"

"I do not understand Bābā. Clarify."

"Kṛṣṇa and the *gopis* were enjoying boating Kṛṣṇa began to turn the boat as if He was going to drown the *gopis*. The *gopis* started crying, then I said, 'He will not drown you,' because I knew He was doing that only to frighten them."

Gosvāmījī also had the *darśana* of the spiritual Vṛndāvana. The spiritual character of the trees and creepers of Vṛndāvana was also revealed to him. He used to say to his disciples, "The trees of Vṛndāvana are all superhuman beings. They live there in the form of trees for the sake of *darśana* of the *līlā* of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. I had Their *darśana* several times."

At this time Yogamāyā Devī also came to Vṛndāvana and began to live with Gosvāmījī. Śrī Rāmadāsa Kathiriyā Bābā, a *siddha* saint, heard some people criticizing Gosvāmījī as a *sannyāsi* living with his wife. He reprimanded them by saying, "Stop it. He is a *siddha* and powerful saint. Such saints are like fire, which burns everything. They are above all the rules and regulations of the *śāstras*."

Gosvāmījī did not want that Yogamāyā Devī should live with him. He had already written to her that she should not come to Vṛndāvana. But for some time Gosvāmījī had not been keeping well. She had come to know this. So she had come. Gosvāmījī said to her, "If you want to live in Vṛndāvana, live in a separate house." She replied, "I have not come to Vṛndāvana for the sake of the spiritual benefit of living in this holy place. I have come to serve you in the present state of your health." There was thus a long dispute between them. At the end Gosvāmījī said, "If you do

not go elsewhere, I shall go. I shall not live with you."

The next day Yogamāyā was about to go for a bath in the Yamunā with Kuladā Brahmacārī, a disciple of Gosvāmījī. Before going Brahmacārījī bowed down to the deity of the Kunja¹⁶ in which Gosvāmījī was staying. As soon as he raised his head, he saw that Yogamāyā Devī had disappeared. He looked all round, but could not find her. It was surprising that she had disappeared all of a sudden, even though the outer door of the *kunja* was closed. He went out and told Gosvāmījī about this with great concern.

Gosvāmījī laughed and said, "Do not worry. She has been taken away by Brahmānandajī. Yesterday after the wrangle with her I remembered Brahmānandajī. He said, 'Don't worry, I shall bring her.'"

Brahmacārī said, "How did he take her away? I did not see him."

"How could you see? He came in his subtle body."

"But Mā was in physical body. I did not see her either."

"The yogis can do anything. They can turn the gross into subtle. He made her subtle by mixing the five elements of her physical body into those elements."

"Where did he take her?"

"To Mānasarovara, where he lives."

"The Mānasarovara in Tibet?"

"No, no. That is the geographical Mānasarovara called 'Mānatalāva'. Anyone can go to that Mānasarovara. The Mānasarovara, where he lives, lies on the way to Kailāśa, the abode of Śiva. Only the *Siddha* yogis can

¹⁶ "Kunja" means bower. In Vṛndāvana homes, particularly those that have a deity in it, are also called *kunja*.

go there. Many Ṛsis, Munis, gods and goddesses live there."

The reason for Gosvāmījī's ill health probably was the food he had to eat. In Vṛndāvana he lived in the *kunja* of Dāmodara *pūjārī*, in which there was a temple of Dāuṇī.¹⁷ Dāmodara used to serve Dāuṇī. Gosvāmījī used to give Him the money his disciples sent from Bengal. He offered *bhoga* to Dāuṇī out of that money and gave the *prasāda* to Gosvāmījī. He was a poor and greedy *Vrajavāsi*. Therefore, in order to save as much money as possible, he offered *bhoga* of very poor and unwholesome quality.

One morning Dāmodara came trembling and weeping to Gosvāmījī and fell at his feet. His cheeks were swollen. It was obvious that some one had beaten him. Gosvāmījī said to him, "Why! What has happened?"

He replied, "Yesterday night while I was asleep I saw a dream. I saw that Dāuṇī came and began to slap me right and left with both hands, saying, 'Hypocrite! You do not feed Me and Gosvāmījī well. Gosvāmī remains hungry day after day. Today I shall thrash you well for the offence you have been committing.' I cried out on account of pain and my sleep was broken. But I still feel the pain. You can see that my cheeks are swollen."

Gosvāmījī said, "Dāmodara! You are fortunate, because Dāuṇī has punished you. Serve Him well. You will be blessed."

One day in the evening an old lady came to Gosvāmījī and said, "Mā Gosvāmīnī is sitting in my house. I do not know when and how she came and from where."

¹⁷ Balarāma, the older brother of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Immediately Gosvāmījī asked Yogajīvana, his son, to go and bring her.

Yogajīvana went and brought her. There was no change in her except that she was putting on orange coloured clothes. Yogajīvana asked her how she had suddenly disappeared. She replied, "Brahmānandajī had come with five *Mahāpuruṣas*. Each had a turban on his head. They took me to the opposite bank of Yamunā and asked me to bathe. After I had bathed I do not know how and where they took me. I saw that I had come to a beautiful mountain, where there was perfect peace and happiness. Brahmānandajī had kept those five men with me for my protection. I went with them wherever I liked. I was so happy there that I did not want to come back. But I could not live there without Kūtī, who is so dear to me. Therefore I have come."

Yogamāyā had desired to leave her body in Vṛndāvana. So she did soon after she had come.

In Vṛndāvana Gosvāmījī used to listen to the *Pāṭha* of *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. After that he himself read out *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* to a small audience. Among the audience there used to be a fat and powerful monkey, who was perhaps the leader of the monkeys of Vṛndāvana. Every day exactly at the time of *pāṭha* he came and sat by the side of Gosvāmījī and remained sitting quietly till the *pāṭha* was over. During this period if anyone gave him something to eat, he kept it aside and ate after the *pāṭha* was over. If any monkey disturbed the *pāṭha*, he stared at him in such a way that he had to run away. Once some monkey took away Gosvāmījī's *lotā*.¹⁸ Gosvāmījī said

¹⁸ A small vessel for water.

to the fat monkey "Some monkey has taken away our *lotā*. Can you get it back?" Immediately the monkey went to the top of a building and looked all around. After some time he brought the *lotā*.

Gosvāmīji loved the monkey very much. He used to say that he was a Vaiṣṇava *Mahātmā*, who lived in Vṛndāvana in that form.

After Vijaya Kṛṣṇa Gosvāmī had lived in Vraja for sometime and realized the final stage of *prema-Bhakti*, Brahmānandaḥ appeared before him one day and said, "Vijaya Kṛṣṇa! Your *sādhana* is over. You now go home. Give *dīkṣā* to others and conduct them on the path of Bhakti so that they may also attain all that you have attained and be blest."

Gosvāmīji went home and started giving *dīkṣā*. At the time of *dīkṣā* while he uttered the *mantra* into the ear of the disciple, the disciple usually had some extra-sensory experience. Once while he was giving *dīkṣā* to Śrī Nagendranātha Bhattācārya he saw a tall, white bearded lustrous figure standing behind him. When he asked Gosvāmīji about it, he said, "You saw Brahmānanda Paramahansaḥ? It is not I, but he, who gives *dīkṣā* through me. I am only a tool in his hand."

After some time Gosvāmīji went to Darabhanga, where he fell seriously ill. The doctors declared that there was no hope for his life. The relatives were informed. They came. While they were sitting round him in sorrowful mood, a tall, white coloured *sannyāsi* came and sat in the verandah outside. No one paid attention to him.

In the afternoon it was noticed that there was a sudden change in the condition of Gosvāmīji. There was no sign of any disease or weakness. In the evening

he took part in *Saṅkīrtana* and danced.

Later he told his disciples, "That day did you not see that *Mahātmā*, who came and sat in the verandah? He was Gurudeva. He came to save me from the mouth of death, because that day I was destined to die. He said, 'You must live for sometime more for the good of mankind.'"

Thus Gosvāmīji survived and continued to give *dīkṣā* to people and guide them along the path of *Śuddhā Bhakti*. At the time of *dīkṣā* he gave the following instructions to his disciples.

1. While doing *japa* one should meditate on the guru. From the figure of the guru will appear Śrī Bhagavān and His *līlā*. ★

2. *Guru-saṅga* (company of the guru) means obedience to the guru. The guru exists even after his body is gone. He is always with the disciple and takes care of him. ★

3. The *sādhaka* should not change the seat and time of *bhajana*. ★

4. The *sādhaka* should get up at 2 a.m. and do *bhajana*. That is the time when many *Mahāpuruṣas* roam about in subtle forms. They give their blessings to the *sādhaka* and help him. ★

5. Bhakti generates a kind of nectar which drops from the palate.¹⁹ It is intoxicating. Only a few drops of it stop hunger and thirst for six or seven days and keep the body greasy and strong. It tastes differently according to the different *bhāvas* of the *sādhakas*. It makes the *sādhaka* unaware of the external world, but fully aware of the internal world. ★

¹⁹ The roof of the mouth near the throat.

6. Vṛndāvana is a live *tīrtha*.²⁰ It is eternally charged with spiritual powers. Continuous living in Vṛndāvana enables the *sādhaka* to attain the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa. But living in Vṛndāvana is fruitful only if the following rules are strictly observed:

- (a) One must not commit violence.
- (b) One must not talk ill of others.
- (c) One must not waste time.²¹
- (d) One must always be engaged in *bhajana*.
- (e) One must regard self-conceit as his biggest enemy.

(f) While doing *Nāma-japa* one should think that the soul is different from the body. To think that the soul is the body is the cause of bondage.

(g) *Nāma* is all. It is more fruitful if *Nāma-japa* is tuned with the inhalation and exhalation of breath. It is through inhalation and exhalation that blood is purified and flows in every part of the body. When *Nāma* is mixed with breath it permeates every atom of the body.

Vijaya Kṛṣṇa Gosvāmī's firm belief in *Nāma-japa* as the remedy for all ills once led to such serious conflict with Lokanātha Brahmācārī a *siddha* yogi of great repute and his friend, that the yogi had to leave his body on account of it.

Lokanātha Brahmācārī, lived in Bāradī secretly. No one knew about him. Gosvāmī came to know about him in *samādhi*. Since then he often went to him and advised his disciples also to go to him. He became his

²⁰ Holy place.

²¹ Gosvāmī used to say that the best time for *sādhana* is this present time. He had written on the wall of his room in bold letters: "This time will not come again."

closest friend. When Vijaya Kṛṣṇa Gosvāmī fell ill in Darabhangā some of his disciples went to inform him. He said to them, "You go to Darabhangā. I am also coming."

The same day, when Yogajīvanā, Vijaya Kṛṣṇa Gosvāmī's son, and some of his disciples were going from Dhākā to Calcutta by ship on their way to Darabhangā, they saw Brahmācārī flying to Darabhangā like a bird in the sky and making gestures to them.

Differences between him and Gosvāmī began, when he started advising the disciples of Gosvāmī to go back to the world and perform karma in order to destroy *prārabdha*,²² because, as he said, no *sādhana* could bear fruit until the *prārabdha* was destroyed. Gosvāmī said that *prārabdha* could be destroyed by *Nāma-japa*, not by karma. Besides *Nāma-japa* the *śāstras* said that *prārabdha* could be destroyed if all our actions, including eating, drinking, sleeping, sitting, moving, etc., were performed for the sake of Bhagavān, not for one's own sake. But they were destroyed more easily by *japa*, particularly if it was tuned with the inhaling and exhaling of breath.²³

Brahmācārī was at that time 156 years old. He had desired to live for 100 years more. But his differences with Vijaya Kṛṣṇa Gosvāmī became so sharp that he left his body at the age of 156. At that time Vijaya Kṛṣṇa Gosvāmī lived in Vṛndāvana. Before leaving the body he went to Vṛndāvana in his subtle body. Throughout the night he wrangled with him. Gosvāmī said, "You

²² Destiny as determined by past actions, which have started bearing fruit.

²³ Śrī Śrī Sadguru-saṅga, I, p. 97.

sometimes teach Advaitism to my disciples, sometimes advise them to do karma. Your advice has spoiled them."

Brahmacārījī said, "I am living in this world for the good of the people. If you think I am not doing any good to them, should I leave the body?"

Gosvāmījī said, "You may do what you like. I have nothing to do with your body."

The next day Brahmacārījī left his body.

After some time Gosvāmījī went to Nīlācala. There was no limit to his happiness to find himself there in the proximity of Lord Jagannātha. Everyday after taking his bath in the sea he went to the temple for His *darśana* and performed dance and *kīrtana* before Him. The people of Nīlācala were surprised to see tears, tremor, horripilation and the other *sātvika-bhāvas* appear on his body during *kīrtana*.

The time had now come for him to leave the world. He lived in Nīlācala for a year. Gradually his body became weak and it was not possible for him to go to the sea for bathing. But every day, when he got up from the *āsana* after meditation and came out of his room, people saw water dropping from his matted hair. When some one asked him about it, he said, "Why, I have just taken bath in the sea."

Gosvāmījī's fame and influence spread so rapidly in Nīlācala that some people got jealous of him. They hatched a plan to kill him. One day a *sādhū* came and offered him a *laddū*,²⁴ saying, "This is the *prasāda* of Jagannātha. Eat it."

Gosvāmījī knew that there was poison in the *laddū*. But how could he refuse to accept the *prasāda*

of Jagannātha? He thought that perhaps it was Jagannātha's wish that he should leave the body by taking poison. So he ate the *laddū* at once. The poison worked slowly. After a month on the 22nd day of the month of jyeṣṭha in 1899, he left the body to join Śyāmasundara in His eternal *līlā* in celestial Vṛndāvana.

Vijaya Kṛṣṇa Gosvāmī's life was a harmonious combination of *jñāna*, karma, yoga and Bhakti. He attained perfection in each. But his mind finally settled in Bhakti. Śyāmasundara was instrumental in this. Perhaps Śyāmasundara made him go through the paths of *jñāna*, karma and yoga and finally adopt Bhakti, because He wanted for the benefit of the *jīvas* to prove through him the superexcellence of Bhakti both as end and means, keeping at the same time *jñāna*, karma and yoga at their proper places, according to their need and usefulness.

²⁴ A sweet.

CHAPTER VII

ŚRĪMATI YOGAMĀYĀ THĀKURĀNĪ

(Navadvīpa/Dhākā)

Yogamāyā Devī was born in 1852 in village Dahakula of district Nadiya. Her father's name was Rāmacandra Bhāduḍī, mother's Muktakeśī Devī. After the birth of Yogamāyā's younger sister Navakumārī, Rāmacandra died. Rāmacandra was poor. It was with great difficulty that he could somehow maintain the family. After his death it became impossible for Muktakeśī Devī and her two daughters to survive. Vijaya Kṛṣṇa Gosvāmī's mother took pity on the bereaved family and brought them to her house. She undertook to support them throughout their life and married Yogamāyā to Vijaya Kṛṣṇa.

At that time Yogamāyā was only six years old and Vijaya Kṛṣṇa eighteen. Vijaya Kṛṣṇa took upon himself the task of educating Yogamāyā and bringing her up as an ideal woman. On account of her own *saṁsakāras* and the teachings of her husband she began to grow as he desired—a pious and thoroughly religious lady, devoted exclusively to her husband and Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Whether in poverty or in prosperity, in suffering or happiness, in fortune or misfortune, she always remained calm and composed like mother earth and served her husband with all her heart and soul.

But it was not long before the time came for her trial. It was due to a sudden change that came upon Vijaya Kṛṣṇa Gosvāmī. He belonged to the family of Gosvāmīs, who had descended from Śrī Advanācārya, a close associate of Śrī Caitanya, and whose only source of income was the donations they received from the disciples. Once an old lady came to Vijaya Kṛṣṇa and said prayerfully with tears in her eyes, "Prabhu! You are my guru. You certainly have the power to deliver the disciples from bondage and suffering. I am in great distress. Kindly deliver me." Vijaya Kṛṣṇa said to himself, "This lady has tremendous faith in me as her guru. But do I deserve her faith? How can I deliver her from bondage when I am myself in bondage? If I cannot, what right have I to function as a guru?" He stopped giving initiation to people and accepting their *pūjā* and donations. He also revolted against the false beliefs and the evil practices that had crept into the Hindu society of his time. He felt that the caste system and particularly Brahmanism was reduced to mockery. The people had forgotten their ideals and thrived only on the false prestige attached to the caste to which they belonged. He, therefore joined the Brāhma Dharma, which aimed at purging the Hindu society of all evils. In his revolt against the prevailing customs and practices he went to the extent of throwing away the sacred thread, the sign of caste. This created a furore in the caste Hindus in Śāntipur. They denounced him as a black sheep among the Hindus. His elder brother Vrajagopāla Gosvāmī admonished him to the extent that he had to leave home and go and live in Calcutta with his wife and mother-in-law.

Now Vijaya Kṛṣṇa had no source of income. Therefore Yogamāyā Devī had to face very hard times. Penury

and privation told heavily upon her. Many times she had to fast. But no one ever knew that she was fasting. She was always happy and contented. For a long time she had to live like that. But she always identified her joy and suffering with the joy and suffering of her husband. She had no joy or suffering of her own.

After sometime Vijaya Kṛṣṇa was made the preacher of Brahma Samaja and the responsibility of the maintenance of his family was taken over by the Samaja. Gradually Yogamāyā Devī became the mother of one son and four daughters. The burden of looking after a family of seven persons, including herself and her mother, fell upon her shoulders, because Vijaya Kṛṣṇa used to be out on preaching tours, sometimes for as long as a year.

But Vijaya Kṛṣṇa could not carry on with Brahma Samaja for long. His hereditary *saṁsakāras* of Bhakti made him disassociate himself from Brahma Samaja and go out in search of a *Siddha-guru*. On the Ākāśagangā mountain near Gayā he met Svāmī Brahmānanda Paramahansa, of Manasarovara. He took initiation from him and began to do *sādhana* as advised by him. Later he took *sannyāsa* from Svāmī Hariharānanda of Kāśī with a view to renounce the world. At that time Svāmī Brahmānanda Paramahansa appeared before him. He asked him not to renounce and said, "No harm will come to you if you live with your wife and children."

During this period Yogamāyā Devī had been passing through the biggest ordeal of her life. She had to steer the ship of the family all by herself through all kinds of rough weather. She had been doing it steadily with faith in the Lord and without losing heart, when threatened

by the storm or the turbulent waves of the sea. There was no end to her surprise and joy, when one day Vijaya Kṛṣṇa Gosvāmī came and said to her, "Your trial and tribulations are over. For Paramahamsaji has asked me to live with family." Obviously the arrangement was divine and in keeping with Kṛṣṇa's promise to look after the welfare of His devotees, who surrendered to Him completely.

By the order of the guru Vijaya Kṛṣṇa Gosvāmī now started giving initiation. He had many disciples. He also initiated Yogamāyā Devī on her insistence. At the time of her initiation *sāttvika-bhāvas* appeared on her body and she had the *darśana* of a *Mahāpuruṣa*, who had white beard and a lustrous body. As she saw him, she cried, "Oh! The same, the same!" and became unconscious. On regaining consciousness she said to Gosvāmījī, "I saw the same resplendent personality having white colour and a white beard, whom I had once seen in my childhood." Gosvāmījī said, "You are fortunate, for you were blessed with the *darśana* of Śrī Avaitācārya."

After *dīkṣā* Yogamāyā began to regard Gosvāmījī not only as her guru, but as her *iṣṭa*.¹ She worshipped him with *candana* (sandal paste) and flowers as a devotee worships his deity. She had no bodily relationship with him.

One day Gosvāmījī went with her to Dakṣiṇesvara for the *darśana* of Ramakṛṣṇa Paramahansa. Ramakṛṣṇa said to him, "You have attained a high state of spirituality even though you live with family. You are following the idea of Rāja Janaka. It is difficult in this Yuga to live according to that ideal.

¹ Predominating deity.

You are blest." Then looking at Yogamaya Devi, he said, "Viṣaya, how long is it since you gave her *sādhana*? I am surprised to see great *sakti* in her. Her presence inspires in me the same *bhava*, as does the presence of *Maha-sakti* (Yogamaya)."

After sometime Gosvāmījī established an *āśrama* in Gedānyā near Dhākā with the help of his disciples. He began to live in that *āśrama* with his family and started preaching the *sādhana* he had received from his guru. Some of his disciples who also lived in the *āśrama*, helped him in this. But his main assistant was Yogamāyā Devī. She also used to cook and serve. She had the same affection for the disciples of Gosvāmījī as she had for her own children and was as much concerned about their wellbeing as about them.

The environment of the *āśrama* was like that of the Rṣis of the old. The relationship between Gosvāmījī and Yogamāyā was also like the relationship between a Rṣi and *Rṣi-patnī* (wife of the Rṣi) of the olden times. An eye-witness account of the manner, in which both were surrendered to each other and worshipped each other was once given by Śrīmatī Yogamāyā Guha, the wife of a disciple of Gosvāmījī. She said, "I saw every day that Mā Thākuraṇī entered a room with flowers and sandal paste. After her entered Gosvāmījī. At that time no one else could go in that room. I wondered what they did. One day out of curiosity I peeped into the room through a window. I saw that Mā first made obeisance to Gosvāmījī. Then she sat before him and worshipped him with flowers and sandal-paste. While she was worshipping tears flowed from her eyes and Thākura sat steady and grave with eyes closed. After worshipping she put something with her hand into his

mouth to eat. Then Gosvāmījī put the remaining flowers on the head of Mā Thākuraṇī and applied the sandal-paste to her forehead. After each had thus worshipped the other, Mā Thākuraṇī came out with the remnants of the food eaten by Gosvāmījī. I saw them worshipping each other like Śiva and Pārvatī. Their *bhāva* was so pure, so sublime that it beggars all description. It was after noticing them in that condition that I could understand what ideal relationship between husband and wife really meant." Muktakeśī Devī used to say that sometimes while worshipping the feet of Gosvāmījī Yogamāyā became unconscious. Gosvāmījī revived her consciousness by singing aloud *Harināma* to her.

Gosvāmījī once said, "The state to which I could rise after practising austerity and difficult *sādhana*, foregoing food and sleep for a long period, Yogamāyā attained easily only by rendering service to me."

The state to which Yogamāyā had risen became evident once when ten or twelve guests came to the *āśrama* after everything was cooked. What was cooked was sufficient only for 10 or 12 inmates of the *āśrama*. But the *āśramaites* and the guests all took *prasāda* to their fill. Yogajīvana, the son of Gosvāmījī and the other *āśramaites* were surprised to see how everyone could eat to his full satisfaction out of the food cooked for only 10 to 12 persons. Gosvāmījī said to Yogajīvana, "Your mother has many powers like goddess Annapūrnā. Remember that she is not in any way different from me. She has in her everything that attracts the people to me."

Once Gosvāmījī went to Vṛndāvana with Yogamāyā and four or five disciples. But after some time he sent Yogamāyā and the disciples back to Gendānyā, because

he wanted to live there in seclusion. Yogamāyā could not bear the separation of Gosvāmījī. She lost her sleep and appetite and constant fasting and weeping reduced her to a skeleton. When she came to know that Gosvāmījī also was not keeping good health on account of unsatisfactory arrangement for his food, she again went to Vṛndāvana of her own. Gosvāmījī did not like this. This gave rise to a wrangle. Gosvāmījī wanted that she should live separately in Vṛndāvana. She insisted on living with him, because she said she had come not because she was attracted by Vṛndāvana, but because she wanted to serve him. We have seen in an earlier chapter² how the conflict was resolved by Paramahamsajī, who mysteriously took Yogamāyā to Manasarovara, where she lived happily for some time. On her return from there she began to live with Gosvāmījī in Vṛndāvana. Gosvāmījī did not object, because Paramahamsajī had so desired, also because she was very much changed after her return from Mānasarovara. The little attachment she had with the world was gone and she was always swimming in peace and transcendental bliss. She had not only become qualified for the *darśana* of the *Nitya-līlā*, but had become part of it. The people, who lived near her, sometimes got a direct proof of it.

One day she went to the temple of Govindaī for *darśana*. With her went Muktakeśī Devī and the mother of Śrī Satiscandra Guha. As they were going the mother of Satiscandra suddenly saw her in the form of an extremely beautiful eight year old girl, wearing a red blouse and *lahanga*³ and beautiful ornaments in

² Chapter VI, "Vijaya Kṛṣṇa Gosvāmī."

³ Garment for lower part of the body

every part of her body. The jingling sound of the ornaments and the supernatural smell of her body animated the environment. It appeared that she was going to *Nikunja*, the eternal resort of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. On seeing her, Satiscandra's mother shouted, "Oh! What's this?" and fell unconscious. When she regained consciousness Muktakeśī Devī asked her what had made her unconscious. On her describing what she had seen, Muktakeśī Devī said to Yogamāyā, scolding her lovingly, "You manifest yourself to others, but not to me." Yogamāyā replied, "Mā! After becoming once manifest, does one ever live?" This was the first indication Yogamāyā gave of her intention to enter the *Nitya-līlā*.

At this time Kumbha Melā was going on in Vṛndāvana. After Kumbha Mela Gosvāmījī said to Yogamāyā, "Paramahamsajī had asked me to live in Vṛndāvana for a year. A year is over. I shall now go to Haridvāra. After attending the Kumbha there, I shall go to Dhākā. You should prepare yourself accordingly."

Yogamāyā said, "You can go to Haridvāra. I shall remain here."

"With whom will you live here?" Gosvāmījī asked.

She replied, "It is only the body that causes all sorts of problems. I shall leave the body." Immediately she asked someone to bring the *paṇjikā*.⁴ After looking into the *paṇjikā* she decided to leave the body on Māgha Śuklā Trayodaśī, the day of Nityānanda Prabhu's appearance. That day Gosvāmījī had gone to attend *saṅga* somewhere. Before he returned Yogamāyā Devī left the body. After getting out of the body she went to Gosvāmījī, took leave of him and entered the *līlā*.

⁴ Indian calendar

Gosvāmījī then returned to the *āśrama* and made arrangements for the funeral. After funeral the ashes were collected. Some of the ashes were taken to Haridvāra for immersion in the Gangā, some were carried to Dhākā for her *samādhi*.

Gosvāmījī went to Haridvāra with some of his disciples. Śrīdhara was one of them. He was finding life unbearable after the disappearance of Yogamāyā Devī. One day while sitting near the Brahmakundā in Haridvāra, he was weeping in remembrance of Yogamāyā Devī. Suddenly she appeared before him out of the Gangā and said, "Why are you weeping for me? You have burnt my body and mixed it with the five elements it was made of. I am now free. I can go wherever I like in the whole *Brahmaṇḍa*. I can now do everything that I could not, while I was in body. So you need not weep. I shall always keep my eyes on you." After this she disappeared.

After the Kumbha Melā of Haridvāra, Gosvāmījī went to Dhākā. At that time Nityānanda Prabhu appeared before him and said, "In Gendāriyā Āśrama build a temple over the *samādhi* of the ashes of Yogamāyā. Install *Nāma-brahma* in the temple and make arrangements for the worship of *Nāma-brahma*." Gosvāmījī asked what name or form should represent *Nāma-brahma* in the temple. Nityānanda replied by flashing before his mind in golden letters the following *śloka*—

*"harernāma, harernāma, harernāmaiva kevalam |
kalau nāstyeva, nāstyeva, nāstyeva gatiranyathā ||*
—*Harināma, Harināma, Harināma* alone is the means for deliverance in the age of Kali. Other means there is none, there is none, there is none."

Gosvāmījī did accordingly. Emphasising the importance of the worship of *Nāma-brahma*, he once said, "According to *Mahānirvāna Tantra* there is no possibility of *sevāparādha* in the worship of *Nāma-brahma*. All that you need for the worship of *Nāma-brahma* is Bhakti. If you make obeisance to *Nāma-brahma* with Bhakti only once during the day, no other *pūjā* is necessary."

CHAPTER VIII

PRABHU JAGADBANDHU

(Dāhāpāḍā, Murshidābād)

Jagadbhandu Prabhu was born in the village Dāhāpāḍā on the bank of Gangā in district Murshidābād. His father was Śrī Dinānātha Nyāyaratna and mother Śrīmatī Bāmāsundarī. It appeared from his golden colour, supernatural beauty and extraordinarily sweet mode and gestures that he was not an ordinary child but some heavenly being or manifestation of the divine that had come down on earth to fulfil some purpose of the Divine. Therefore, although his name was Jagadbandhu, people called him 'Jagat Sundara (Beautiful Jagata)', 'Bandhu Sundara (Beautiful Bandhu)' or 'Bandhu Sonā (Golden Bandhu)'. The astrologer found in his horoscope the constellation of five planets, which indicated that he would be superhuman and his religious influence as a messiah of the fallen souls would extend far and wide.

Jagata was only one year old when his mother died. He was seven when his father died. Soon after the death of his mother he was taken by his uncle Bhairavacandra Cakravartī from Dāhāpāḍā to his home at Govindapur. His widowed daughter Digambarī Devī began to look after him with great care and affection.

The superhuman character of Jagata came more and more to light as he grew. When he played hide

and seek with boys, he could be easily caught on account of the supernatural smell of his body. His courage was extraordinary. He would go to the bank of river Padmā, board one of the boats lying at anchor and release it from the anchor. The boat would go floating along the stream. One of his playmates would go and tell Digambarī Devī. She would come running and crying. Then someone would jump into the river, swim up to the boat and bring it back to the bank.

He would go to the forest with his friends. Someone would say, "Jagata! Be careful. There is a hole over there. There may be a snake in it." Jagata would place his foot over the hole and stand fearlessly.

He would go to the cremation ground with his friends and lie down on one of the *arthis*¹ there. His friends would say, "Jagata! What are you doing?" The *arthī* is impure." But Jagata would not listen. On going back home the friends would tell Digambarī Devī about it. She would say angrily, "Jagata! You are impure. You must bathe before entering the house." He would reply, "Didi!² Purity and impurity are mental concepts. Whatever I touch becomes pure." Digambarī Devī would forcibly pour a pitcher of water over him.

After some time Bhairavacandra built a new house in Brāhmaṇakāndā, where he shifted with his entire family. But only seven months after that he died and the burden of the family fell upon his two sons Gopālacandra and Tārṇicarāṇa. They made adequate arrangement for Jagata's education.

¹ A bed made of bamboos, on which a dead body is carried to the cremation ground.

² Sister

At the age of thirteen the sacred thread ceremony of Jagata was performed. This marked the beginning of a new change in his life. Jagata, who had so far been restive and sportive suddenly became serious and grave. In thought, word and deed, and in the observance of the rules and regulations of the *śāstras* he began to look like a young Rṣi. He bathed three times during the day, performed *sandhyā-pūjā*³ both morning and evening, cooked his own food, observed *Brahmacarya*⁴ with strictness, always kept his body covered with white cloth, kept his eyes towards the ground while walking, talked very little, sat on the last bench in the school, and was often lost in deep thought. Sometimes he went out of home and sat in deep meditation in a lonely place for hours. At night Dīgambarī Devī made Jagata sleep by her side. From time to time she touched him to make sure that he was there. If she did not find him, she cried, "Jagata! Jagata!" His brothers and servants got up and went out in search of him. Someone shouted, "Oh! I feel the smell of Jagat's body coming from the other side of the pond." When they went there they saw him sitting in deep meditation. No one had the courage at that time to disturb him.

Jagat was always seen in a thoughtful and pensive mood. It appeared that a spark was smouldering in his heart and he was restless to do something great.

After Jagat had finished his education in Brāhmaṇakāṇḍā, he was sent to Rāncī, where his brother Tāṇṇīcaraṇa was an income tax inspector. He admitted him into a school there.

³ Religious service performed daily in the morning and evening

⁴ Abstinence

Tāṇṇīcaraṇa's neighbor and his friend Raibahādura Rākhāla Bābū had a valuable horse, who had gone mad. He used to throw away anyone who tried to ride him and run. Once Jagata heard Raibahādura talking with Tāṇṇīcaraṇa about the horse. He spoke out, "I shall tame the horse." Tāṇṇī was alarmed. He said, "Jagata! You must not dare to do that. The horse is ferocious. He has curbed the pride of many horsemen. You must not even go near him." Jagata laughed and said, "Dādā! Even a lion turns into a mouse, when he comes under my control." Tāṇṇī laughed it away as a joke.

One evening when Raibahādura returned from his office, he was surprised not to see the horse in the stable. When Tāṇṇīcaraṇa returned from his office, he was surprised not to see Jagata at home. Someone said he had seen Jagata riding the horse. As soon as they heard this, there was no end to their anxiety. Raibahādura said, "Tāṇṇī Bābū! I am not worried about the horse. He may or may not come back. He may live or die. But I am deeply concerned about your brother."

Both were lost in anxiety and looking expectantly towards the road, when they had a distant vision of the horse running towards them in great speed and raising dust all around. Tāṇṇī Bābū's heart sank. He thought the horse was returning after throwing away Jagata and crushing him into pieces. But the very next moment the horse came running in lightning speed with the rider on his back and stood at the door.

Jagata held the bridle of the horse in one hand and whip in the other. His face was red and wet with perspiration. He got down from the horse and stood before Raibahādura with pride and said, "Raibahādura! Your horse is tamed!"

This provided an instance of Jagata's wonderful power of attraction and enchantment, which worked on men and animals alike and which in later years turned atheists into theists and sinners into saints.

One day, when Tāṇṇī Bābū returned from the office he saw Jagata writhing with acute stomach-ache. He called the doctor. The doctor diagnosed that the patient was given poison. He treated accordingly and he was cured.

There was no one in the house except the cook and a servant. The cook had already fled. When the servant was threatened, he confessed that he and the cook had conspired to give poison to Jagata, because they used to steal and found Jagata's presence in the house a hindrance to stealing.

Tāṇṇī Bābū wanted to hand over the servant to the police. But Jagata said, "Dādā! The remedy for wickedness is not punishment, but penitence. Excuse him. He will feel penitent." Tāṇṇī Bābū excused the servant but he did not think it proper to keep Jagata with him. He sent him to Pābanā to live with Golokamaṇi, the younger sister of Digambarī Devī, whose husband Prasannakumāra Lāhiṇī was a big lawyer. He thought that there he would be better looked after. Lāhiṇī Bābū admitted him into a school in Pābanā.

Jagata's career as a great saint and savior and redeemer of mankind started from Pābanā. The spark that had been smouldering in his heart now turned into flame. He was never very much interested in education, although he always passed the examination satisfactorily. But now education was but nominal, because he had already attained the highest stage of Bhakti, which was the end of education. He now used to be always lost

in the world of *bhāva* and *līlā*. He was fond of *kīrtana* since birth. But *kīrtana* had now become the heart and soul of his life. As soon as the sound-wave of *kīrtana* struck his ear even from a distance, he started dancing and became unconscious. His body trembled, tears streamed out of his eyes, drops of blood covered every pore of his body and sometimes breathing also stopped.

Once he was witnessing a dramatic performance relating to Dhruva. As soon as Dhruva started singing—*'kothāya padma palāśalocana hari—O! Where is the lotus-eyed Hari?'* he started trembling and became unconscious. At that time Candraśekhara Kālī, the famous doctor of Calcutta was there. He said that it was an epileptic fit. But when he examined him closely he found that his pulse-beat had stopped. His touch produced *sāttvika-bhāvas* in him and he began to feel like dancing and singing *'Hari bol!'*

Once while Jagadbandhu was bathing in river *lochāmatī*, he heard a cowherd singing, *'āra kabe dekhā hābo jugala rūpa ekāsane—Oh! When shall I see the divine couple (Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa) sitting together?'* Immediately he became unconscious and fell into the river. The people present there brought him out and laid him on the bank. For a long time consciousness did not return. A Vaiṣṇava Bābājī said, "He is in *bhāva-mūrchā*." ⁵ Come let us sing *Harināma* around him." All began to sing *'Hari-bol, Hari-bol!'* with the clapping of hands. Jagadbandhu opened his eyes, but the *bhāva* persisted for a long time.

Jagadbandhu was mad on account of his extraordinary devotion to *Harināma*. He found another mad

⁵ Senselessness due to *bhāva*.

friend in Hārāṇa. Hārāṇa was his name, but he was called 'Kṣyepā⁶ Hārāṇa.' People were surprised by their friendship, because outwardly they were opposed to each other in character, form, mode of living and manners and in almost every other thing that was external. Jagata was extraordinarily beautiful, Hārāṇa was ugly; Jagata was the very figure of cleanliness, Hārāṇa of dirtiness. Jagata bathed thrice during the day, wore clothes that were washed by his own hands and were spotlessly clean. He never even touched the bed or clothes used by others. Hārāṇa wore clothes full of patches of old and dirty pieces of cloth collected from various places. It appeared from his dirty body that he had never in his life even touched water. He lived in the verandah of a dilapidated building in a lonely place in Pābanā. From the crevices in the walls of the verandah hissed many a snake even during the day. All around him one could see lying old and broken earthen pots full of stale and rotten eatables, thrown away by people and collected by him from various places. Jagata was still in budding youth, while it was difficult to say anything about the age of Hārāṇa. He had seen the marriages of the grandfathers and grandmothers of many old people of Pābanā. People called him *trikāḷajña*⁷ and *vāksiddha*⁸. Whatever he said about any person even casually always came true. But he was very rough in behaviour and his language was abusive. Therefore people generally did not go to him. But, as they say, only a jeweler knows the worth of a jewel, Jagadbandhu had the

⁶ Mad

⁷ One who knows the past, present and future.

⁸ One whose words always come true.

highest regard and love for him and called him reverentially 'Śivā'. He called Jagadbandhu affectionately 'Jagā'. Spotlessly clean and fresh like a flower that had just bloomed, Jagata would often go and clasp him in spite of his dirty and awfully bad smelling body, as if he was eternally his own and he loved him more than his own self. Locking him firmly in his arms he would say lovingly, 'O! Śivā.' Śivā said, 'O! Jagā.' They would both go on repeating this till they were lost in *Prema-samādhi*. Even in the absence of Jagadbandhu Śivā often cried, 'Jagā, Jagā' like one who was intoxicated. Obviously he derived from it the same pleasure as he derived in clasping Jagā. Hārāṇa often went to the house of Śrī Prasannakumāra, Lāhīḍī and Golokamaṇi Devī and fed him affectionately. Once he looked at her in a mysterious manner and said, "Look Dīdī! Jagā is not human. Jagā is *Rājā* (king); we are all his *Prajā* (subjects)." It is said that Jagadbandhu once told one of his confidants, "Śivā is truly Śiva and the Advaitācārya of *Gaura-līlā*, who has been living here in disguise since the disappearance of *Gaura-līlā*."

Ever since Jagadbandhu went to Pābanā, the youth of Pābanā began to be drawn to him. They were attracted by his beauty, the supernatural radiance and smell of his body, his piety, his love, his spirituality, his high spirits and strictly disciplined life. They were anxious to surrender themselves at his feet so that he might guide and mould them and make them like himself.

Jagadbandhu was only waiting for this opportunity. He became their preceptor. His precepts to them were.

1. Practise *Brahmacarya* and make others do the same.

2. Whatever you do, do for Govinda, knowing that the doer is He, not you.

3. While practising *Dharma*⁹ if any calamity or disaster comes, face it bravely and patiently, because *Dharma* is Kṛṣṇa.

4. Do not talk ill of others.

5. Do not waste your time in useless activities and talks.

6. You may or may not do anything else, but you must do *Harināma*. *Harināma* is my life. Keep me alive through *Harināma*.

7. Others may or may not do *Harināma*. But you should go about chanting *Harināma* loudly so that they may hear. Only by hearing *Harināma* people can attain deliverance from *Māyā*.

Precepts are fruitful only when the preceptor himself is a living embodiment of the precepts. The powerful precepts of Jagadbandhu, who was himself a living example of all that he preached, soon brought about unprecedented change in the young men of Pābanā. Their guardians apprehended that the boys might renounce the world and they might be deprived of their only hope and support in old age. They conferred together and decided to cut at the very root of the problem by killing Jagadbandhu. The boys came to know about this. They informed Jagadbandhu. He remained grave, undisturbed and unmoved like the Himalayas, but said, "Many atrocities will be committed upon this body, but no one will be able to kill it. Suffer violence, but do not be violent. You may also have to face violence. Move about fearlessly."

■ Religion and morality

Jagadbandhu used to go out for a walk before sunrise every morning. At that time of day some villains came from behind and started hitting him mercilessly. They went on hitting till he fell unconscious on the ground. They thought he was dead and ran away, leaving him alone in the forest. He was seen by a watchman returning home after night duty. He went and informed Lāhīḍī Bābū. He and his men ran towards the forest. They lifted Jagadbandhu and brought him home. The news soon spread in Pābanā like wild fire. Crowds of young men started coming to Lāhīḍī Bābū's house. They were all wild with anger. As soon as Jagadbandhu regained consciousness they asked him about the names of the villains. He remained silent. When asked repeatedly he asked for paper and pencil. While he was writing everyone was anxiously looking at the paper for the names. But instead of the names, what he wrote on it in bold letters was—"I have not come to chastise, but to deliver."

After this episode Tāriṇī Bābū came and took Jagadbandhu with him to Rāncī. He admitted him into an English school at Rāncī in class tenth. But at this time, when the thought of redeeming the *jīvas* by preaching *Harināma* to them was persistently gnawing him, how could he apply his mind to studies and to what end? Impelled by the thought, he one day sneaked out of Rāncī. No one knows where he went and what he did for two years. After two years he reached Brāhmaṇakāndā and started his life's mission—the preaching of *Harināma* in right earnest. He built two *āśramas*, one in Brāhmaṇakāndā and the other in Vākcara, near Brāhmaṇakāndā.

He organized seven *kīrtana* parties. In each party

there were two *mṛdaṅgas*¹⁰ and four pairs of *karatālas*¹¹. All the seven parties went about doing *kirtana* in different parts of the city everyday. Jagadbandhu also accompanied the *kirtana* parties. Sometimes all the parties together performed *kirtana* continuously for twenty-four hours. The songs sung in *kirtana* were composed by Jagadbandhu himself. An important part of *kirtana* used to be *Harī-lūta*.¹² This also Jagadbandhu did himself. At first he scattered *prasāda* in *Harī-lūta*. Then in a fit of joyful emotion he squandered pen, pencil, stick, clothes, coins, notes and whatever he could lay his hand on. Once he threw away a *sītāra* in *Harī-lūta*, saying, *Haribol!* The *sītāra* broke. He gave the owner of the *sītāra* a pair of *karatālas* and made him understand that the proper instruments for *kirtana* were *mṛdanga* and *karatāla*. He said that *mṛdanga* was Advaitācārya himself and *karatāla* Nityānanda.

Once Jagadbandhu was out for *Nagara-kīrtana*¹³. From the opposite side was coming Banamālī Rāya, the highly devoted Rājā of Tādāsa on the back of an elephant, surrounded by pikemen and gunmen. He saw in the midst of the *kirtana* party an extraordinarily beautiful golden youth of about 20, dancing and singing and shedding tears profusely as he sang. He wondered who could be that golden youth, so divine in looks, so mad with love. He got down from the elephant. On inquiry he found that he was the same Jagadbandhu about

¹⁰ A drum-like musical instrument.

¹¹ Cymbal.

¹² Scattering of sweets, etc., in honour of Hari in order that people may pick them up and eat.

¹³ Circumambulation of the town while performing *kirtana*.

whom he had heard so much already from different persons. Then he went penetrating through the crowd near him and bending on his knees said to him, "Prabhu! I request you to grace my home once with the holy dust of your feet."

The next day came Raghunandana Gosvāmī, the son of the Rājaguru of Banamālī Rāya and took him on an elephant to the house of Banamālī Rāya. As soon as he reached there Banamālī Rāya fell prostrate at his feet. He took him to a room adjacent to the temple of his Thākura Rādhāvinoda and closed the door. He tried to say something. But he said, 'Prabhu!' and his throat was choked and tears streamed out of his eyes. He could not say more. But he had said by his *bhāva* more than he could say by words. He had said that Jagadbandhu was his Prabhu and he was his servant. Jagadbandhu replied by saying, 'Rājarṣi!', implying thereby that though a *Rāja*, he was like a *Ṛṣi*. Since then Jagadbandhu began to be called Prabhu Jagadbandhu and Banamālī began to be called Rājarṣi Banamālī Rāya.

Since then Banamālī Rāya began to take Jagadbandhu's advice as his command. As advised by him, he took upon himself the responsibility of printing and distributing the works of Rūpa, Sanātana, Jīva and the other Gosvāmīs. Even today we find in the libraries the numerous works of the Gosvāmīs published by him.

Before coming into contact with Jagadbandhu Prabhu Banamālī Rāya was very much under the influence of Brāhma Samāja. He regarded Brahma as formless and had no faith in the Śrī Vighraha of Bhagavān. The service of Thākura Rādhāvinoda in his house was done

by the *pujārī* as a matter of routine in the same manner in which it was done by his father, when he was alive. Part of the service was the service of *hukkā*.¹⁴ Rādhāvinoda had acquired the habit of smoking *hukkā* since the time He was worshipped by a devotee, who used to smoke *hukkā*. The devotee offered *hukkā* to Rādhāvinoda before smoking.

One day after *bhoga* was offered to Rādhāvinoda Jagadbandhu said to Banamālī Rāya, "Come, let us enjoy the *hukkā-smoking līlā* of Rādhāvinoda." He went with Banamālī Rāya and sat down in the verandah of the temple. After sometime he said, "Now hear, Rādhāvinoda is smoking. The '*gūḍa-gūḍa*' sound of *hukkā* can be heard clearly." By his mercy the spiritual ears of Banamālī Rāya opened and he was surprised to hear the sound. Tears of love and penitence for not believing in the Śrī Vighraha began to flow from his eyes. He was drowned in *bhāva-samādhi*.

Since then Banamālī Rāya's faith in Śrī Vighraha became so strong that even if someone said something, which even remotely implied that the Śrī Vighraha was only a statue, he felt extremely pained at heart.

Banamālī Rāya regarded Rādhāvinoda and Jagadbandhu Prabhu as non-different and served them accordingly.

Jagadbandhu started his mission of preaching *kīrtana* with the Buno community of Fandapur, which was the lowliest and the most down-trodden community of the Hindu society. Since long these people had been

¹⁴ Smoking pipe with long flexible tube.

neglected and ill-treated by the Hindus. The English missionaries wanted to convert them into Christianity. They fixed a day for their conversion. The same day Jagadbandhu organized a grand and pompous *samkīrtana* procession. The procession marched on rending the sky with high pitched sound of numerous *mṛdangas* and *karatālas* and reached the colony where the Bunoes lived. The Bunoes joined the *samkīrtana*. Jagadbandhu embraced their leader Rajanī Pāsā and sang and danced with him. Other members of the party embraced the other Bunoes and danced with them. *Samkīrtana* changed the heart of the Bunoes. They gave up the idea of proselytization into Christianity. The missionaries had to return disappointed. Jagadbandhu gave them *mṛdaṅga* and *karatāla*. They organized a big *samkīrtana* party. Jagadbandhu included it in his own party and treated them both equally.

Rāmabāgāna in Calcutta was densely populated by Dōmas.¹⁵ Jagadbandhu often went there and stayed with his devotee Tinkāḍī. He taught them how to perform *kīrtana*. Within a short time Rāmabāgāna became the centre of *kīrtana* in Calcutta. All the Dōmas became devotees. They worshipped Jagadbandhu as their Bhagavān. Jagadbandhu also gave every respect to them. He did not even hesitate to eat from their hand.

Gradually Jagadbandhu attracted several other persons, who became his chief assistants in the work of preaching *Harināma*. Rāmadāsa Bābājī was his closest companion since his boyhood. He used to be the principal singer in his *kīrtanas*. He had a sweet voice and his *bhāva* was deep. As soon as he started *kīrtana* all

¹⁵ The lowest caste in India.

the *sātvika bhāvas* appeared on his body. His name was 'Rādhikā.' But Jagadbandhu lost outward consciousness as soon as he said 'Rādhikā.' Therefore he called him 'Sārikā.' Later it was he who gave him the name 'Rāmadāsa.'

Atula Campatī was the husband of Digambarī Devī's daughter Kṣīrodā Sundarī. He was the headmaster of a high school in Ārā, in district Patanā. He met Jagadbandhu first at the time of his marriage and came under his influence. He began in his own mind to regard him as his guru. Later he renounced the world and became a recluse. He used to go about chanting 'Haribol! Haribol!' with a bag hanging from his shoulder and ringing cymbals with his hands in the streets and by-lanes of Calcutta. Therefore he began to be called 'Haribol Campatī.' He visited the place where the Īomas lived in Rāmadāsa more frequently.

Śrī Devendranātha Cakravartī was also the Headmaster of a High school. He also came under the influence of Jagadbandhu and became his ardent devotee. Like Campatī he also renounced the world and started going around different places chanting 'Jai Nītāi! Jai Nītāi!' Therefore he began to be called 'Jai Nītāi.'

Similarly, a number of other devotees came under the influence of Jagadbandhu and were charged by him with *śakti* to go round and preach *Harināma*. Prominent among them were Mahendrajī, the founder of Mahānāma Sampradāya, Rameśacandra Cakravartī, Bakulāla Visvāsa, Mahimadāsa and Navinacandra Vrajavāsī.

Jagadbandhu passed his last days in Goyāla Cāmatāpālī, near Faridapur. An *āśrama* was built there, which was called 'Śrī Śrīdhāma-Faridapur-Śrī Āngana.' While

living in Śrī Āngana signs of *bhāvonmāda* (madness in love or divine madness) began to appear in him. In the state of *bhāvonmāda* he used to be so lost in *bhāva* that he had no consciousness of body. He did not know whether he had clothes on his body or not. Usually he used to be naked. In his *bhāva* he used to be like an infant, who depended entirely upon others. From 1902 to 1918, for about sixteen years and eight months, he remained silent. During this period he lived in a dark room of Śrīāngana with the door closed from inside. He did not allow a lamp to be lit in the room. He had no connection whatsoever with the outside world. He ate and slept very little. He left his body in 1921, two and a half years after he broke silence.

Who was Jagadbandhu and what was the secret of his *mahāmauna-līlā* (his long period of silence), it is difficult to say. He himself said, "I am a sweeper. I have come to sweep the hearts of people." "I am *Harināma*'s and no one else's. You possess me and unite with me by doing *Harināma*." His devotees hold that he was the combined incarnation of Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu and Nityānanda Prabhu. In the form of Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu Śrī Kṛṣṇa fulfilled his want of a superior *rasa*—the *rasa* resulting from the experience of his own beauty and sweetness, which Rādhā alone enjoyed fully through the eyes of *prema*. He could do so in his *Gambhīrā-līlā* as Gaura, because Gaura was the combined incarnation of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā. Similarly in the form of Jagadbandhu Gaura fulfilled His want of a superior *rasa*—the *rasa* resulting from the experience of His own beauty and sweetness, which was fully enjoyed by Nityānanda. He could do so in

His *Gambhīrā-līlā* in Goyālacāmatā as Jagadbandhu, because Jagadbandhu was the combined incarnation of Gaurāṅga and Nityānanda.

In *Caitanya Bhāgavatā* Mahāprabhu is depicted as saying that He would have two more incarnations:

henomate āro āche dui avatāra /
kirtāna ānanderūpe haiba āmāra //
 (C.Bh., 2.26.11)

The followers of Jagadbandhu think that he was one of the two incarnations mentioned in *Caitanya Bhāgavatā*, because the lustre of his body was like that of Śrī Gaurāṅga, because like Him he launched the expedition of delivering the *jīvas* from bondage through *samkīrtana*, because he was also humbler than a blade of grass like Him, and because like Him, he was also in his lifetime regarded as Bhagavān and people called him 'Nava-Gaurāṅga.'

It is because people believed that he was Gaurāṅga Jagadbandhu had sometimes to adopt strange devices to conceal himself from them. Once he had gone to Navadvīpa to bathe in the Ganges on some auspicious day, when Navadvīpa was crowded with pilgrims. News spread like wild fire that Nava-Gaurāṅga had come to Navadvīpa and they would be blessed with his *darśana* when he went to bathe in the Ganges. Huge crowds gathered on his path to the river. Jagadbandhu came to know about this and left Navadvīpa at night.

On another occasion when he was going to Faridpur, thousands of people, who believed that he was Bhagavān gathered in a market through which he

had to pass, for his *darśana*. He asked his men to prepare an *arathī*.¹⁶ He lay down on the *arathī* and covered himself with a cloth. His men carried him through the market chanting 'Hariboll,' as if they were carrying a corpse.

¹⁶ A bed made of bamboos to carry a dead body to the funeral ground.

CHAPTER IX

ŚRĪ RĀDHĀRAMAṆA CARĀṆA DĀSA DEVA

(Navadvīpa/Purī)

Śrī Rādhāramaṇa Carāṇa Dāsa Deva was popularly known as 'Barhā Bābā', which means 'Bābā the Great.' He was so called because he was truly great—great in heart, great in love, great in power to do things, which our men of reason and science would not believe even if they see. He was like a stream of love running its course and sweeping along with it every soul that came in its way toward the boundless and bottomless Ocean of Love and Peace and Transcendental Bliss. He carried Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's message of love from place to place, door to door and person to person, singing and dancing, laughing and weeping in rapturous ecstasies like Mahāprabhu Himself. A veritable dynamo of love, he lovingly embraced whomsoever he met and by his mere touch transmitted a wave of love into his heart.

He was like an angel that came down to earth to alleviate our suffering and deliver us from bondage by telling us how all our suffering could be easily removed and we could attain the highest goal of life—the attainment of the Lotus Feet of the Lord only by chanting His Name. Since we, the *jīvas* of Kālī would not easily believe, he took it upon himself to demonstrate to us the inconceivable power of the Divine Name

by curing diseases, melting stones, making the trees dance and the animals behave like devout Vaiṣṇavas and even by bringing the dead back to life by chanting His Name.

Yes, he brought even the dead back to life by chanting *Harināma* on a number of occasions. The most glaring example was that of the dead body of a lady, whom he brought back to life on the cremation ground itself before a crowd of thousands of people in Calcutta.

The dead body of a young lady was brought by some *māravāris* to the cremation ground on the bank of Ganges, when Śrī Rādhāramaṇa Carāṇa Dāsa Bābā Mahāśaya was bathing in the river along with Jogen Bābū and a number of other disciples. As Bābā saw this he was for sometime lost within himself. He said to himself, "Ah! The lady is going without hearing the Name of the Lord. Poor thing! She will have to suffer the unending cycle of birth and death." Then he said to Rādhāvinoda and Phaṇī, "Go and see what the *māravāris* are doing with the body. Ask them not to burn it till I come."

Rādhāvinoda and Phaṇī went and saw that the *māravāris* had placed the dead body on the pyre and were about to set fire to it. They said to them, "Our Guru Mahārāja has requested that you may please wait till he comes." They did not heed Bābā Mahāśaya then sent Jogen Bābū, who said to them entreatingly "Please for God's sake wait a while, our Gurudeva is coming." The *māravāris* looked amazingly at Jogen Bābū and at each other and did not know what to do. In the meantime Bābā Mahāśaya came. He said, "Brethren, please bring the corpse down from the pyre." As he said this his

heart was full of compassion, his eyes beamed with affection and his voice rang with a note that was divine and benedictory. They brought the body down. Bābā Mahāśaya asked Rāma Dāsa to sit behind the head of the body and Rādhāvinoda and Phanī Dāsa to sit on its either side. He himself sat near its feet, holding its great toes with both of his hands. He then began to chant, "Bhaja Nitāi-Gaura Rādhe-Śyāma, Japa Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Rāma" and asked all others to join him in the chanting. A crowd gathered on the scene. Everybody was chanting and looking eagerly and expectantly now at Bābā Mahāśaya, now at the dead body. This continued for half an hour. Then suddenly Bābā Mahāśaya exclaimed, "Jai Nitāi!" and pulled the toes of the lady with a jerk. And lo! The lady opened her eyes. The *māravāris* sprang with joy. Everyone shouted, "Haribol!" while the lady looked all round with bewilderment. Bābā Mahāśaya said to her, "Do you recognize your relatives?" She replied in the affirmative by a gesture of the eye.

Bābā Mahāśaya asked the *māravāris* to bring some milk. The lady was made to drink milk. She drank it little by little. As she drank the cries of "Haribol!" again rent the sky.

The news spread like wild fire that a *sādhu* had brought a dead body back to life at Nimtalā Ghāta. Crowd after crowd of people began to pour in from different directions. This continued for about an hour and a half. Then Bābā Mahāśaya ceased to hold the lady's toes. She also ceased to breathe and closed her eyes.

Her relations fell at Bābā's feet and prayed that she might be made to live and sent back home. But Bābā Mahāśaya said, "How can I do what Caitanya Mahāprabhu Himself did not think it proper to do with

the son of Śrīvāsa? Could He not make him live longer after He had brought him back to life for a short while? He did not, because He did not think it proper to undo what fate had done or God had willed. Now, God willed to demonstrate to the people, who would not believe without seeing, that the power of the Name is infinite and that it can even bring the dead back to life. So He has done it. One must know that the Name of God is even more powerful than God. It can do easily what God cannot. If one believes in the power of the Name, nothing else remains to be done. Without the mercy of the Name one can neither achieve *prema* nor enter the realm of the Divine *līlā*. With these words Bābā Mahāśaya soothed every one and then went back to bathe again in the Ganges.

Śrī Rādhāramaṇa Caraṇa Dāsa was born in 1853 in village Mahishkholā in the district of Jessore in Bengal. His father was Śrī Mohancandra Ghoṣa and mother Śrīmatī Kanakasundarī Devī. He was named Rāicarāṇa.

As Rāicarāṇa grew up his qualities of head and heart began to manifest themselves. He was so full of the milk of human kindness that he would not mind running a risk to remove the distress of others. On one occasion, when he was returning from the school, he gave away his umbrella to a boy, who had none and chose to suffer the scorching rays of the summer sun. On another occasion he found, on his way home, a poor man shivering with cold in winter. He wrapped him with his shawl and came shivering back to home.

Once Rāicarāṇa saw an old man lying on the wayside. The man had fever on his way home from

the market and his bundle of foodstuffs was lying at a distance by his side. He could not muster the strength to carry his luggage. Rāicarāṇa lost no time to put the bundle on his own head and lend him a helping hand to see him home. The poor man hastened to tell him that he belonged to a servile caste, he was a washerman, and that the respectable gentleman's son should not demean himself so much as to carry the burden of a man he was not supposed to touch. But he stopped him saying, "No matter, no question of caste. You are ill and you need my help. I must see you home."

Instances of this kind can be multiplied, for his life was a never ending series of such loving sacrifices for suffering humanity at every stage and period of his life.

Rāicarāṇa was only five years old when his father died. After the death of his father his three brothers also died one after the other. There was no end to the grief of his widowed mother. On her insistence and to alleviate her suffering he had to marry. His father-in-law had no son. He had therefore to look after his rich estate in Ghorākhālī as well as his own.

He proved an ideal landlord. He was always good and kind to his subjects—always ready to extend his sympathy and munificence to the needy and the poor. By his amiable ways he easily won the hearts of his people. They voluntarily gave him the possession of lands, which had been out of possession for years. His administrative ability attracted the attention of the great Zamindar of Śrīrāmpur and he made him the manager of his Māmudpur estate. He carried on his philanthropic activities in both the estates of Ghorākhālī and Māmudpur. He excavated tanks at his own expense, started free

schools for the spread of primary education, grew vegetables of different seasons for the free use of the people.

But men like him are in the world, yet not of it. They would do anything the circumstances make them do and do it well. They would marry and work and earn as others do. But they would make nothing of leaving their wives and children when the hour comes. The hour did not take long for Rāicarāṇa to come. He realized the futility of all that he did to alleviate the suffering of the people and make them happy. He began to think that he must do something to cut at the very root of the problem. A hint of what he wanted to do could be got from the following song he used to sing at this time, when he was alone.

"When, O when, will you take the Name of the Lord!

*The days are numbered and they will end
The drops of water on the lotus are unsteady,
They fall off at the breath of the gentlest wind
Even so is life, death comes and brushes it away.*

*The limbs are there, you cannot move them.
There are the eyes, but the light is fled,
The ears are open they can no longer catch
The Name of the Lord in the hour of death."*

The transitoriness of the world and the inevitability of death made him decide to renounce everything and go out in search of the Eternal.

So one day he said good-bye to the world and went out of home never to come back to it again. He did not know where to go. It struck him that he should go first of all to Bhavānīpur in the district of Bagurhā, witness the goddess Durgā and then do as

she would bid him do. He went and was overjoyed to see the image of the Divine Mother¹ The Image was a Living Image.² Rācarāṇa Bābū determined to stop there for some time and so he stayed on, and his meals were supplied from the guest-house attached to the temple.

Rācarāṇa decided to do *puraścaraṇa*³ On the appointed day, the day of the full solar eclipse, Rācarāṇa Bābū took his bath and began the *puraścaraṇa* in wet clothes in a sequestered corner, free from disturbances. He was soon in a trance, silent and speechless, motionless and still, the eyes uplifted and lost in the eyelid, the counting finger firmly fixed to the numbering digit, the very image of a yogi, lost in meditation. The hairs stood on end from time to time, and he trembled in every limb. The eclipse came and went, but he was there; and then, when the sun was up again, shining with

¹ Amongst the Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇavas the worship of deities other than Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa is forbidden. Even the *Guṇavataṛas*: Brāhma, Śiva and Viṣṇu are not regarded as independent objects of worship. For those who regard them as separate and independent objects of worship there is the terrible curse of Bhṛgu Muni, referred to in the *Bhāgavatam* (4.2.27-28). But the attitude of contempt or indifference to other deities is condemned (*Haribhakti-vilāsa*, 7.119-120). It is maintained that deities like Śiva and Kālī or Durgā can be worshipped in so far as they are themselves Vaiṣṇavas, or worshippers of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and in so far as they are helpful in the service or realization of Kṛṣṇa. In regard to Durgā, however, it should be noted that the Durgā of the phenomenal world is different from the Durgā of the transcendental world. The former is a manifestation of Māyā-śakti, the External Energy of Bhagavān, in which inhere the three *guṇas* (strands)—*sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas*, which cause the creation and destruction of the phenomenal world. (See next page)

a vengeance after the eclipse, he began to perspire; and the perspiration was so profuse that everyone feared he was going to die.

A Brahmin took pity on him, and tried to make him drink a cup of milk. He dipped a piece of cloth in milk, wrung it well, and dropped the milk into his open mouth. He regained his consciousness after he had drunk it off. But he could not walk. They helped him on to a neighbouring house, and the members of the Brahmin family took special care of him and requested him to stay with them till he was strong enough and fit for his spiritual adventures abroad.

Rācarāṇa Bābū thanked them for their kind offer, but he could not comply with their request. He was "in the hands of God," he said, and must act up to the biddings of the Divine Mother who spoke to him in his heart of hearts. The Brahmin was very curious

(From previous page)

(*Bhakti Sandarbha*, 285). The latter is a manifestation of Svartūpa-śakti, the Intrinsic Energy of Bhagavān, which is above the three *guṇas* (*Bhakti Sandarbha*, 285). It is the *Līlā-śakti*, or the *śakti* that contrives the divine *līlā*. It is, therefore, called *Yogamāyā*. The Vaiṣṇavas worship *Yogamāyā*, because no one can enter the divine *līlā* without the mercy of *Yogamāyā*. They have always sought Her help in their quest for Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Mother Yaśodā worshipped Her in order that she might find Kṛṣṇa as her son. The *gopīs* worshipped Her in order that they might find Him as their husband. Rācarāṇa Bābū worshipped Her in order that She might help him find the guru, who could guide him on his way to Kṛṣṇa.

² We have elsewhere spoken of the spiritualisation of the Image. The living Image is the spiritualised Image that would come and talk to men of spiritualised consciousness.

³ A religious practice calculated to push us forward in the onward march of our spiritual life. It consists mainly of *japa*.

to know the secret, and pressed him to explain what he meant "The Gracious Mother" he cried like a boy and then began to speak in a broken voice, "She came and set Her Gracious Hand on my head as She said that my prayer was granted and that I was to find my guru on the banks of the Saraju He would satisfy the hankering of my soul I asked Her how I should be able to know him whom I had never seen before She said that She would speak to him about it and that he should be awaiting my arrival—that he was a tall man with long arms reaching down to the knees, long drawn eyes stretching up to the ears. His former name was Jogendranātha Gosvāmī of Khardaha and present name was Śankarāraṇya Purī. He was not at all inclined to proselytize but that he would have me for a disciple only by Her special sufferance He was no ordinary man but had the spirit of Nityānanda Himself, Who was non-different from Śrī Caitanya⁴ in his Evangelical mission in the world So saying, the Mother disappeared and then you know how I am here in your house"

Rāicarāṇa reached Ayodhyā He was on the tip-toe of high expectation as he looked for the saint here

⁴ Śrī Caitanya is the incarnation of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself, Who came down, in His Infinite mercy, to teach people by His own example, the blessed way of *Prema-Bhakti* (Divine Love), which leads to the supreme beatitude and bliss of perfect God-realization With Him came Nityānanda, the incarnation of Balarāma, the elder brother of Kṛṣṇa, and His non-different Self as the name itself suggests, which means Eternal Bliss It was He Who was charged with the evangelical mission in the world, when Śrī Caitanya Himself was exhibiting the deepest mysteries of spiritual excellence in the coign of seclusion at Nilācala (Purī).

and there on the bank of Saraju Suddenly he found the saint entering the wood with the wooden bowl in hand after finishing his ablutions in the holy waters of the Saraju He saw Rāicarāṇa and said smiling, "Well, are you come, my child? You are welcome I was waiting for your arrival." Rāicarāṇa ran to him and fell at his feet The saint laid his hand on his head, blessed him, took him by the hand, and led him to his hermitage

After Rāicarāṇa had bathed the saint made him sit in front of him and breathed the *mantra* into his ear. As the *mantra* was uttered Rāicarāṇa quaked vehemently, his hair stood on end, tears flowed from his eyes and he fell senseless on the ground On his regaining consciousness the saint locked him in his arms and each overwhelmed with *bhāva* bathed the other in tears of love

Rāicarāṇa stayed with the guru for a few days. The guru taught him the guiding principles of his new life. One day he said to him, "Look, I have an impulse from within—a bidding of the Lord. So it must be done You need not stay with me any longer You must set out on your mission and spread the Name of the Lord far and wide in the world."

"Excuse me, Gurudeva. I thought of clinging to your feet and serving you to the last day of my life."

"That is not to be my child, and so you must give up that idea and make up your mind to shoulder the task, God has been pleased to impose upon you. You say you want to serve me. But what is service if not doing one's pleasure? I shall not be better pleased with anything else If you look upon me as your spiritual friend and guide, you cannot but choose to obey me

Come, be a good child and do what I say."

"Thy will be done, my Lord But the task is great and I am so small Empower me to accomplish the mighty task."

"O, it is done my child. Fear not and set to work. You are in the hands of God. He will be with you and lead you on."

Rāicarāṇa fell weeping at the feet of the master. He raised him, embraced him heartily, and blessed him as he bade him good-bye.

Rāicarāṇa set out. He traveled far and wide till he came to Navadvīpa. Something in his appearance attracted Jagadānanda Dāsa Bābājī, who took him to his residence and gave him a solitary room for his undisturbed meditation.

Now he lived a life of abstraction, out of touch with the men of the world. He bathed in Ganges three times a day, cooked his own food and ate only once in the afternoon. He spent the whole day in the loud chanting of the Name of the Lord. Sometimes he would laugh and sometimes cry, swimming always at pleasure in the sea of love. He was love-intoxicated and behaved like one who was gone mad. His host called him Rājen Bābū. So from Rāicarāṇa he became Rājen and was known as such hereafter.

Birds of the same feather flock together. At this time he met another love-intoxicated person, Navadvīpa Candra Dāsa. Their eyes met and they felt they were old familiar friends. They flew into each other's arms and shed tears. They were in ecstasies. They danced together in joy and shouted the Name of the Lord. It seemed they were two only in form but one in heart. How deep, how perfect the union of their hearts. They

became friends forever and would no longer part from each other.

Two other devoted souls Kṛṣṇagovinda and Rāsamohana felt attracted by Rājen Bābū and joined him. All together decided to go to Purl.

They started wearing a *cāḍara* and a *dhōṭī* and with *karatālas* in hand, dancing and singing the Name of the Lord. Rājen Bābū led them. He had his own charming way of leading. As he marched he danced in *samkirtana*—the tall figure with hands uplifted and one foot fixed perpendicularly on the other. They were so attractive—these God-intoxicated devotees that they had a large following of men, women and children as they went.

Thus they marched on. In the evening they stopped to rest in some village or woodland and ate what providence gave them. They reached Sākṣigopāla. Rājen began *samkirtana*. He began as was his wont to explain the history of the image before him in extempore verses in the course of *samkirtana*. The verses came to him so swiftly that it seemed he was drawing upon memory and singing well-known songs. So exquisite were the songs that they might well be taken to be the classical compositions of some ancient bard of Vaiṣṇava literature. The bystanders were simply charmed and whispered among themselves, "Who are these blessed souls? Whence do they come? Who is he, the tall man towering above them all? He is the true likeness and stuff of a superman. He has long arms, gracious form, sweet smiling face and he has about him a heavenly air, which marks him out from the rest of mankind. He is undoubtedly the 'Barhā Bābājī'—the head of the party and the others are his followers." So he came to be called 'Barhā Bābājī'.

and we shall henceforth refer to him by this new name.

It was midnight. All was calm and quiet around. They were lying outside the temple. There came two persons, one white, the other gold-colored, and they sat near the head of Barhā Bābāji. The former said, "Listen, I come to deliver a *mantra*,⁵ which you are to practise and proffer to anyone, who would be willing to accept it." So saying, he communicated to him 'Gaura-mantra' of twenty two letters and disappeared. The night wore on and it was morning. But Barhā Bābā was weeping all the while. He was out of his mind. He was shouting 'Ha Nitāi! Jai Nitāi!', dancing, whimpering, rolling and tossing on the ground. He told his companions what had happened to him. He clung to them and cried aloud. They tried their best to soothe him. He came back to himself, but ran at full speed, crying 'Ha Nitāi! Jai Nitāi!' on his way to Nīlācala, his companions following him. Men wondered at them and wished to inquire, but they were beside themselves with joy and would not rest till they had a look at the radiant face of the Lord of Nīlāchal.

At last they came to Nīlācala, the abode of the Lord. They went to the temple and saw the Lord. Their hearts were full and out of the fullness of their hearts they began to sing. They were entirely lost to the world, lost in the depth of love of God, and their song drew the multitude of visitors to their side. A thousand voices joined in the *samkīrtana*. It was a scene the like of which was never seen during the last four hundred years of the Caitanya era. The worshippers and the guards

⁵ Each and everyone of the manifestations of God has its own *mantra*—potent word, having power to reveal Him as He is.

enjoyed the scene. Those who came to look at the Lord remained to sing or hear the song. Some danced as they stood, some with hands upraised.

Next Barhā Bābā moved to Gambhīrā, the abode, where Śrī Caitanya lived in seclusion. As he looked on the *kanthā* used by Him and touched it with his hand, he burst out into sobs and muttered in the fullness of his heart, "have mercy my Lord on Thy humble servant, so may I serve the servants of Thy servants and rest under the peaceful shade of Thy sheltering Feet." So saying he swooned away and fell down. His companions hastened to help him and restored his consciousness.

Now they did not know where to stay and what to eat. For Barhā Bābā resigned himself completely and depended solely on the dispensation of the Lord. He would never move an inch at his own sweet will, for his will was merged in the will of the Lord, and he himself was no longer his own, but the Lord's. Presently, however, they took their *prasāda* in Nārāyaṇa Chātā, where *prasāda* was being distributed free on the occasion of some festivity. But they were so ill-clad and so humble in their ways and manners that the man, who was serving *prasāda* took them to be ordinary beggars. He made them sit on the public road along with the beggars and served them *prasāda* on a single leaf, which was torn in the middle. Navadvīpa Dāsa spread out his *bahuvāsa*⁶ and put the torn leaf on it. Now the *mahanta* came with *prasāda*, saw what they had done and exclaimed, "You rogues! You cannot give yourselves a

⁶ The *varagīs* or the recluse Vaiṣṇavas wear the *kopīna* and an outer cloth reaching down to the knees. The latter is called *bahuvāsa*.

dinner, and you turn Vaiṣṇavas to cast a slur on Vaiṣṇavas. What have you done?" Barhā Bābājī said smilingly, "Yes sir, you are right. We are not Vaiṣṇavas, and can never hope to be Vaiṣṇavas. Bless us and pray we may be allowed to be servants of Vaiṣṇavas like your honoured self. If your Lordship will give *prasāda* to us all, give us here on my leaf and we shall take it all together." The *mahanta* was softened and he gave them *prasāda* lavishly.

Another day, they finished their ablution in the Narendra Sarovara,⁷ and were going to the Temple of Jagannātha singing and dancing on the way, when they met a *sannyāsī* at the head of a procession, walking with silver slippers under a silvered umbrella, who seemed to be a saint of note in the sacred city. They inquired about him and came to know that he was no other than Bhūtanātha Svāmī, in charge of the Jagannātha Vallabha⁸ at that time. They made obeisance to the saint, and the latter raised his hand and blessed them on the way. They had gone but a few paces, when the *sannyāsī* summoned them back to his presence, and at this time when they came back and bowed again, the saint himself bowed saying "*Namo Nārāyaṇa*"⁹ in return and said, "*Mahātma*,¹⁰ may I ask you where you are putting up?" "Father," said Barhā Bābā, "we have

⁷ This is the well-known bathing tank in the vicinity of the Temple of Jagannātha.

⁸ The word means, the favourite haunt of Lord Jagannātha. It is here that the Lord prepares to hold some of His entertainment services outside the Temple.

⁹ This is the form of salutation in vogue among the *sannyāsīs*, who behold God in all that meets their eyes.

¹⁰ Or 'the great-souled'—a term of respect.

no fixed place for our residence, but at present we are staying at the out-house of Gaṇeṣa Mahānti." "Well, well," said the *sannyāsī*, "You are no ordinary man. I felt transcendental joy as I looked at you. I think you are intimate with Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, the son of Jagannātha Mīśra. In fact, from what I can gather from your looks and doings, I think you are an exact copy of Śrī Caitanya in your life and conduct. You are an 'Imitation Caitanya'. I would say. But, you see, you have renounced the world, you should not go and stay with a worldly man. Why not come and stay with me at my place? Do you come and occupy a room at the Jagannātha Vallabha, and sing the Name of the Lord to your heart's content." "As you bid us, *mahātma*, so it shall be done," said Barhā Bābājī, and went away singing to the Temple of Jagannātha. So, on the third day they came and put up at the Jagannātha Vallabha, to the great joy of Bhūtanātha Svāmī, who was very favourably disposed towards them. 'A jewel alone knows what a jewel is like' says the Bengali proverb, and it is so true.

A recluse came in, with matted hair on his head, and entered into lively conversation with Barhā Bābājī. "By your leave, Your Reverence," said the newcomer, "May I ask you to which sect you belong?"

"Sect?" What sect, my brother, while God is one, and all belong to Him and Him alone!"

"Yes, sir, that is true. But then, there are so many different creeds in religion, and men follow the one or the other. This is what I mean."

"Well, the different creeds are only so many different modes of grasping the same Eternal Truth. The differences cease to exist when the devotee comes face to face with the Truth. They represent the different schools of

thought in our attempt to conceive the Divine Idea. They are lines of thought, which can be and should be united and reconciled into a harmonious whole which makes up the entire fabric of the Perfect Religion of all the world."

"But, there are these sects, and I would like to know the sect to which you belong."

"I take objection to the term 'sect' which implies inclusion of some to the exclusion of others, for religion is in reality an undivided whole, which admits of all these different conceptions at the different stages of spiritual evolution. But then, there is one thing. Some have climbed the initial steps, some up to the middle, while there have been some, who have gone up to the top of the ladder of evolution. Those who are at the top can see the different sets of religious aspirants clinging to the ladder at the various stages of spiritual development, and they can harmonize the apparent conflicts and contradictions and proclaim Truth from the pinnacle of God-realization. So, there are these gurus, at the different stages of God-realization who have taught their disciples according to their power of comprehension, and they have started the lines of spiritual descendants, which, in after times, have come to be grouped as the different sects of religion on earth. There is no sect in the religion of God who is One, there were no such sects and schisms in the teachings of the Great Masters—the *Loka-gurus*—they have come out of the imperfect understanding of the later disciples of the Great Masters."

"Thank you very much. I am so glad that I have found one, who is above the limitations of narrow sectarianism. Now I can breathe freely, and I think I can take the liberty of inquiring about the Perfect Religion

of all the world. No more of sects and schisms, but, let me know, if you please, the stand-point you would take to understand the Perfect Religion of the world."

"My stand-point is that of Śrī Caitanya or Śrī Gaurāṅga. Who gave us His Religion of Love and Beauty, which is the Perfect Religion of all the world."

"Then, you belong to the Gaudīya Vaiṣṇava¹¹ Sampradāya, don't you?"

"Yes, and no, at the same time. Yes, because I have accepted the principles of the Gaudīya Vaiṣṇavas, but no, because I do not think that the Gaudīya Vaiṣṇavas should form a clique and mar the universal character of the religion of Śrī Gaurāṅga."

"But who is Śrī Gaurāṅga?"

"Śrī Gaurāṅga is the incarnation of the Supreme, the High God, Who incarnated Himself as Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the earlier age."

"But how can you prove that Śrī Gaurāṅga is the Lord Himself?"

"No proof like ocular proof, they say. They saw Him and knew Him to be the Lord Himself. Those who had the eyes—the spirit's eyes—to see Him aright. Nityānanda saw Him and knew Him, and so did the other devotees, who were spiritually advanced in those days. They do see Him and know Him to be the Lord even now—they who can discern the High Spirit with the spirit's eyes. But, what is ocular proof to one that is blind? How can you prove it to the blind that the sun is up? Yes, to those who have eyes, when the sun rises, there needs no ghost to come and tell them

¹¹ This is the name given to the followers of Śrī Caitanya, because His religion emanated from Gauda or Bengal.

that the sun is up. So it is with the Lord. They can see, who have developed their spirituality and rendered themselves fit for God-vision. But the blind cannot see, no amount of reasoning will convince the blind man of the existence and effulgence of the sun. He must wait till a doctor comes and restores his eye-sight, and then he can see the sun like those that talked to him about the sun, when he could not see. That's it, come, will it do?"

"Venerable Sire, you may be right when you say so from your own point of view. But one may think that you are just evading the question. The blind must be convinced of the possibility, if not of the actual existence, of the sun, before he can be persuaded to go to a doctor to open his eye-sight for a first-hand knowledge of the sun."

"Yes, but that is second-hand knowledge you see, and you must remember that this can only persuade you to undertake the task. It will never carry conviction before you have actually realized the truth for yourself. However, I will try."

Bābā Mahāśaya then went on to enumerate the *śāstras* in which Śrī Gaurāṅga is mentioned as an *avatāra*—the *Chāndogya*, the *Caritānya Upaniṣad*, *Ananta-Samhitā*, the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, *Padma-purāṇa*, *Garuḍa-purāṇa* and a host of others.

The recluse was overpowered with emotion. He burst into tears and consigned himself to Barhā Bābāji, who initiated him and put him on the way to spiritual blessedness. This *sādhu* was Kṛṣṇānanda Dāsa, the same who accompanied Bābā Premānanda Bhāratī on his way to America for fulfilling his evangelical mission in far off lands.

After a few days came *Ratha-Yātra* (the car festival) day. It was a great day for Barhā Bābāji. He sang and danced before the *ratha* (car) as it went on. It appeared from his *bhāva* and gestures that as he sang and danced, he saw in the Śrī Vighraha of Lord Jagannātha the Lord Himself in all his resplendent beauty smiling at him. Who slackened the speed of the car at times to hear him sing and see him dance.

The car went on till it was evening and the men were tired. Śrī Jagannātha stopped to rest for the day. Most of the devotees went away to their respective lodgings. But Barhā Bābāji would not go. He would stop on the way, while the Lord was on the way, and partake of the *mahāprasāda* of the Lord. Four days passed in this way, and it was on the fifth day that the Lord reached the Gundicā Mandira, the destination of His journey on the car.

Gundicā Mandira represents to the devotees *Vṛndāvana*. So the Lord is come to *Vṛndāvana* after a long spell of absence. Sweet Kṛṣṇa is come at last. The *gopīs* look and look at His dear face and drink deep of the ambrosial potion in that Face Divine. Then they open their hearts and begin to pour the pent-up contents of an age of separation—"O! How is He changed! It is not the same loving sweet heart as of old! What is the matter with Him? Has He forsaken us and given away His heart to another damsel?"

Barhā Bābāji was possessed with this sentiment. He was looking at the Lord and shedding tears as he sang to express the pangs of lost love. He wept, he wailed, he cried, and made them cry who gathered round him. He sobbed aloud and rolled from one end of the Jagamohana to the other. The joints gave way, and

the flexible limbs were turned and twisted in diverse ways, till breathing itself was stopped and he lapsed into a state of insensibility in the intensity of his Divine suffering.

They knew not what to do and how to bring him back to his senses, when suddenly there came a *sannyāsi* in yellow robes, and assured them that Bābājī Mahāśaya was a saint of a very high order and that the state he was in was hardly to be approached by ordinary mortals, and that he could be summoned back to consciousness again if somebody would undertake to sing him a song purporting to be a response from the lips of Kṛṣṇa to soothe the sufferings of His love-lorn Rādhā.

The song was sung, and lo! Bābājī Mahāśaya started up in great joy and showed signs of recovery. Tears, tremor and hornpilation appeared, and the song was repeated again and again till he completely regained his senses and sat erect, to the great joy of the bystanders.

Now, there were the 'Historic Foot-prints' of Śrī Caitanya on a slab of marble near *Garuda-stambha*¹² inside the Temple of Jagannātha—foot-prints marked on stone, converted into the consistency of clay by the magical tears that streamed down the cheeks and chest of Śrī Gaurāṅga entranced at the sight of Lord Jagannātha

¹² It is customary to have a pillar surmounted by the form of Garuda, the king of birds, supposed to be the carrier of the Lord, in front of the image of Viṣṇu. There is such a pillar at the other end of the Jagamohana in front of Lord Jagannātha. It was from here that Śrī Caitanya would look at the Lord every day, when He was staying as a *sannyāsi* at Nilacala.

These sacred relics used to be trampled down by inadvertent strangers that came in crowds on the special occasions to have a look at Śrī Jagannātha. These foot-prints were removed, under orders of the Rājā in the presence of his officers, to a spot in the adjoining yard within the temple. Barhā Bābājī Mahāśaya had them tabernacled and duly installed on a lotus of white marble.

At this time a boy, whose name was Śītal Dāsa, came and joined the party of Barhā Bābājī. He was entrusted with the *sevā*, or service, of these foot-prints. Gauraceraṇa Chakravartī was also at this time initiated by Barhā Bābājī into the life of renunciation—the taking of '*bheka*' as it is called—and came to be known as Govinda Dāsa. Thus they came, one by one, and filled the ranks, as Barhā Bābājī set out on his excursions against the impurity and sin of the Kali-Yuga.

After staying in Purī for about two years, Barhā Bābājī decided to go to Navadvīpa. He started on foot. He took only four or five persons with him and left the others to perform *samkīrtana* before Jagannātha every day and to serve the Foot-prints of Mahāprabhu. He went dancing and singing all the way and preaching *Harināma* and initiating people in the path of Bhakti from village to village.

In Navadvīpa he took *sannyāsa* initiation (*bheka*) from Siddha Śrī Gaurāṅga Dāsa Bābājī, a disciple of Siddha Śrī Jagannātha Dāsa Bābājī. Gaurāṅga Dāsa Bābājī gave him the name Rādhāramaṇa Ceraṇa Dāsa.

One day when Bābājī Mahāśaya was returning from Mahāprabhu's Temple performing *kīrtana* with his party, a bitch came and joined the procession on the way. This *samkīrtana*-party stopped at places and sang

then proceeded with redoubled vigour, singing the *saṁkīrtana* with maddening peals. Every time the party stopped the bitch would pause till the party passed by and then she would roll and toss on the ground just as a devotee would do to bless his soul. She went on doing this, and followed the party to their destination, and then she found it in her heart to stay with them at their place. They called her Bhakti Mā (Mother Devotion), for she was no ordinary dog. She was never found falling out with the rest of her species as other dogs would. She always kept company with the devotees and regularly attended the *saṁkīrtana* at home and abroad wherever it was held.

Days went on, and Bhakti Mā was taken ill. She was wasting away day by day till one day it was felt that she was going to shuffle off her mortal coil, and so the *saṁkīrtana* was held in her hearing to pour down the Lord's blessings on her departing soul. So she passed away with the Lord's Name on her ears, and her body was thrown into the sacred stream of the Ganges—a departure, to be envied by saints with hopes of salvation in after life.

The Cīrā Mahotsava was duly performed, as usual after the departure of a devotee, on the fourth day after her demise Bābāji Mahāśaya thought of giving an entertainment service to the Vaiṣṇavas for blessing her soul in the Land of Bliss.

The entertainment was accordingly held on the fourteenth day after her departure Bābāji Mahāśaya said that some of her kin must be fed to complete the ceremony in the proper way. His attendants were struck dumb with surprise to hear this strange proposal from the lips of our Barhā Bābāji. For, whoever heard that dogs could

be formally invited to dinner and made to eat accordingly?

But there was one—our old friend Navadvīpa Dāsa Bābāji—who had the nerve to believe in everything that fell from Bābāji's lips. He started up and said, "Well then, please let me know what I must do to see it done?" Bābāji Mahāśaya said, "Why, it is so simple. You should only prostrate yourself whenever you meet any of the dogs in the street and tell them with folded hands, 'we humbly solicit the favour of your company along with your friends and relatives at the dinner service, to be held tomorrow in memory of our late lamented Bhakti Mā, at the premises of our Gurudeva in the Barhā Ghāta quarter of the city.'"

Now, this is the usual form of invitation letters addressed to our human guests on such occasions, and we may readily guess at the incredible impropriety of this address to be delivered to dogs for similar purposes and the heavy responsibility of the man appointed to shoulder this mighty task. Navadvīpa was only too keenly conscious of the charge laid to his care, and he fell at his Bābāji's feet with tears in his eyes. He felt that it was something which he could never hope to accomplish by himself unaided by the mysterious powers on high. Bābāji Mahāśaya slapped him on the back and let him go.

Navadvīpa was surcharged. He staggered, reeled and tottered from side to side as he walked. One would have taken him for a drunkard or a madcap. So he went round the city, acting up to the biddings of his master, till it was night-fall, when he returned back to his lodging.

Next morning, preparations were going on for the proposed entertainment and Vaiṣṇavas were summoned

to join the festival. News arrived that some of the leading Vaiṣṇavas thought that their prestige would be at stake if they would go and join a festival, where dogs were some of the invited guests. Barhā Bābājī went personally to the Barhā Akhra to settle the affair, but to no purpose. Some of them were inexorable. But the festival was held in spite of their stout resistance, and thousand others came to witness the strange performance.

Some of these guests had a shrewd suspicion that it would end in a farce after all, for evidently it was something impossible, which could never be brought about. Others had great confidence in the Bābājī, and thought he could make impossible possible, when he had a mind to do it. Then came Rādheśyāma Bābā. All stood up and prostrated themselves before this worshipful personage. He was affectionately disposed towards Bābājī Mahāśaya. He began to take him to task for setting his hands to a task which could not on the face of it be accomplished. He also urged that he would be sorely aggrieved if the proposed entertainment of dogs would prove a failure, for he could not brook to hear Bābājī Mahāśaya belittled by anybody, although our Bābājī himself might not take it to heart and laugh it away.

Bābājī Mahāśaya argued that God was omnipresent, present in dogs as well as in men, and so appeals made to God in the dogs must necessarily have the same effect as those made to God inherent in men. He prayed them to remember that God came out of a pillar and manifested Himself as Nṛsiṃha, when Prahlāda appealed to Him to show Himself to his demon father Hiranyakaśipu. He said that it was their want of faith in the Lord that made them suspect the practicability

of the whole thing. The day wore on, and the assembly were just hoping to see their skeptical prophecies fulfilled, when behold! the dogs actually began to appear, one by one. Barhā Bābājī Mahāśaya saw this, he started to his feet at once, he prostrated himself before his canine guests, and duly received them as he showed them to their seats on the royal road at the Barhal Ghāta. There was great sensation amongst the people, and they gazed on one another in dumb surprise. The news spread, and thousand others came to witness the strange performance. O wonder! Is it possible that dogs would accept human invitation and come as guests in response to our human appeals! May be, they are come, only in expectation of the bits and crumbs thrown away on such occasions. But no, not one, two or four of them for the matter of that—they come in crowds. Some fifty to sixty of them have already appeared on the scene! And what was more wonderful—dogs would quarrel, we know, they would fly at each others face whenever two dogs would meet—but no, these dogs came and sat down quietly side by side, as we men should do in our entertainment halls! It was something phenomenal indeed and men stood on both sides of the public road to notice the strange proceedings of the unheard of affair.

Bābājī Mahāśaya was transported beyond measure to find that his God sent His grace to show to the skeptical multitude what true faith could do even at the present age in the teeth of the gigantic disbelief so foolishly entertained in the Spirit and Spiritual truths. His eyes reddened with emotion as he threw the skirts of his clothes round his neck, and humbly beseeched his God in the dogs to issue orders for the dinner to be served. At this, all the dogs looked up to him at

once, and he knew what they said, after which he instructed his men to supply his quests with the plantain-leaves, and serve them up with all the items of the entertainment rolled into a mass for their acceptance.

So, it was done. His biddings performed, the dogs were severally served with boluses on their leaf-plates on the royal road. Now, look here, wonder again! Dogs with edible matter before them, and they would not touch, they would not partake of food supplied to them! All the leaves were served one by one, and they sat upright. Then Bābājī Mahāśaya spoke in a broken voice and with tears in his eyes, requested them to begin. At this time, a black dog came and sniffed at the leaves after which the dogs fell to their leaves.

Cries of 'Harī! Harī!' and 'Ulul! Ulul!' were heard on all sides around and they verily seemed to rend the skies above. It was a scene of scenes enacted before the wondering multitude, and their exclamations and roars of applause echoed and re-echoed in all quarters of the city.

The service ended, the dogs turned away from the leaves. Then an earthen pot filled with water was offered to each of them. They drank the pots and sat still. Brts were taken as *mahāprasāda* from their leaves and water in a pot as a wash from their feet—for they were Vaiṣṇavas indeed, and no ordinary dogs, nay, they were God Himself invoked and incarnated by the power of the mighty faith in the Omnipresence of God. Bābājī Mahāśaya again folded his hands and prostrated himself before them, asking them if they were satisfied, and requesting them to pardon any shortcomings on the part of his attendants and retire to their own places at their own sweet will. The dog-Vaiṣṇavas then left the scene

one by one, as they came. Bābājī Mahāśaya in a paroxysm of transcendental joy rolled and tossed on the blessed leaves from one side to another again and again. The men scrambled for a morsel of the *mahāprasāda* and our Rādheshyāma Bābā embraced Bābājī Mahāśaya heartily as he blessed his darling with tearful eyes before he took leave to repair to his lodgings.

Bābājī Mahāśaya gathered the *mahāprasāda* all in a lump, offered it to the departed spirit of Bhakti Mā and then partook of it in high glee along with his attendants in the *āśrama*.

It was about ten o'clock in the night, when it was perceived that a plateful of *prasāda* was lying unnoticed. Bābājī Mahāśaya asked his men to keep it intact, for it struck him one of his guests was yet to come and it was to be set apart for him.

After a while Bābājī Mahāśaya was coming out of his bed-chamber, when he found a red dog lying at the door of his room. The dog saw him and got up at once, and cast significant glances as it looked up to him. He called Caitanya, his mate in charge of *prasāda*, and asked him to serve *prasāda* up to the guest at once. Caitanya acted up to it. Navadvīpa Dāsa now coming up and looking at the newcomer exclaimed that verily it was the same dog he met first of all and the same whom he requested to convey the message to each and every one of the kinsfolk and bring them all to the scene of occurrence. So now, they all saw why this particular guest was late, for he had to go about and send them up, before he himself could come to take his share of the entertainment.

One day Barhā Bābā Mahāśaya went with his

party to Kṛṣṇanagara and stayed in the garden of Śrī Kanthā Bābū. At four o'clock in the afternoon he set out with his party dancing and singing the Name of the Lord as usual. Soon they reached near the college of Kṛṣṇanagara. The college had just closed. The teachers and the students were coming out of the college premises. The melody of the *saṁkīrtana* rang in their ears. As they turned in that direction they saw a tall and impressive looking Bābājī and his party dancing and singing in ecstasy. Tears incessantly streamed out of the eyes of the tall Bābājī. His hair stood on end and he trembled like one caught in a blast of emotion, which it was difficult to control. He was singing and inviting others to sing. He sang:

*"Sing, O sing the Lord's Name
They are but one—the Lord and the Name
The Lord's Name is sweet, so sweet!
I pray, I bow down at your feet,
Sing, O sing the Lord's Name:
The Name will bless you with Kṛṣṇa-prema."*
Adhara Bābū, the professor of the college, and

Vrajaśāla Bābū, the teacher of the collegiate school, found the invitation irresistible. They joined the *saṁkīrtana* party and began to sing and dance with them. The students also felt forcibly drawn and began to sing and dance. The call was also heard by the shopkeepers, who came down from their shops to join the *saṁkīrtana* and the passersby—the wood-cutter with the load of wood over his head and the washerman with his load of clothes—all came and joined to create a gala of *saṁkīrtana*, such as the people of Kṛṣṇanagara had never seen before.

Bābājī Mahāśaya was so lost in ecstatic joy and emotion that he occasionally felt like losing outer

consciousness and falling senseless on the ground, but he controlled himself by shouting *Nitāi! Nitāi!* His shouts seemed to rend the sky. Others also caught his emotion and were so transported that they sang and danced like those who had drunk deep of the cup of divine drink.

The procession marched on and on, and as it marched it swelled in numbers. Slowly night came in and Bābājī Mahāśaya stopped *saṁkīrtana* and returned to the garden.

Days rolled on like this. Every day *saṁkīrtana* procession went round Kṛṣṇanagara and every day people were carried away by the flow-tide of spiritual frenzy generated by the *saṁkīrtana* into a land of transcendental bliss, they had never known or experienced before. One day as the procession was marching through a new route, Bhuvana Mohana, a devotee, was saying to his friends, "Everybody in Kṛṣṇanagar now regards Barhā Bābājī as truly Barhā Bābājī, a great Bābājī or a *mahāpuruṣa*. Here he is coming, singing and dancing in *saṁkīrtana*. If he leads the *saṁkīrtana* into my house, I would know that he is really a *mahāpuruṣa*." As he said this he saw that the *saṁkīrtana* procession had taken a new turn and was entering the lane in which Bhuvana Mohana Bābū's house was situated. Bhuvana Mohana came forward and bowed down to the procession. Bābājī Mahāśaya clasped him in his arms and entered his house singing and dancing. In the middle of the courtyard of the house there was a *tulasi* plant on a raised platform. Bābājī Mahāśaya and his party started going round and round the plant, dancing and singing. Crowds of other people entered the house and joined them.

At this time Bhuvana Mohana Bābū brought some

*batāsā*¹³ in a *śāla-patra*¹⁴ and gave it to Bābājī Mahāśaya for *Harilūt*¹⁵ Bābā took the *śāla-patra* in his hand and began to sing the song usually sung at the time of *Harilūt*

Bābā held the *śāla-patra* plate in his left hand and he was dancing with his right hand lifted upwards as he sang. All others were dancing and singing with him. He occasionally scattered *batāsās* with his right hand and shouted 'Haribol!' People fell upon the *batāsās*, collected and ate them. There were many people standing outside, because the courtyard was packed to every inch. They were sorry that they could not participate in the *Harilūt*. For their sake Bābā came out and began to scatter *batāsās* all round. The loot accompanied by dance and *kirtana* went on for an hour, during which everybody was transported into ecstasy. But the people were surprised to see that although Bābājī Mahāśaya was freely and repeatedly throwing a handful of *batāsās*, the *śāla-patra* plate in his hand always remained full up to the brim. Suddenly Bābā became aware of this and threw away the plate for fear of fame.

The next morning Bābājī Mahāśaya was invited at the house of Jogeṣa Bābū, the local sub-registrar to take *prasāda* in the noon and perform *samkirtana* in the afternoon.

In the afternoon many people started coming to the house of Jogeṣa Bābū. *Samkirtana* began at about 4 p.m. Bābājī Mahāśaya was dancing and singing, describing

¹³ A dry sweet made from sugar

¹⁴ Leaf of a timber-plant.

¹⁵ Scattering of sweets, etc., in honour of Hari in order that people may pick them up and eat.

the *samkirtana* scene of Lord Gaurāṅga dancing in ecstasy in the midst of his devotees. He was stressing the point that the Name of the Lord was the only means and Nityānanda the only guide to that beatific realization, when suddenly he cried

"Lol there is Nitāi entranced, behold,

Men high and low caught in His loving hold!"

He said this and was lost to the world. Tears streamed forth, hair stood on end, and trembling like a plant caught in a blast, he fell in a trance upon the ground. His followers surrounded him and sang the name of the Lord till at last he regained consciousness and cried in a husky voice:

"Bhaja Nitāi-Gaura, Pābe Rādhe-Śyāma,

*Japa Hare Kṛṣṇa-Hare Rāma."*¹⁶

All others repeated in the same strain, and so on, till it was about ten o'clock in the night when the party divided itself as a dual throng, singing the *kirtana* by halves, one group singing 'Bhaja Nitāi-Gaura Pābe Rādhe-Śyāma,' the other singing 'Japa Hare Kṛṣṇa-Hare Rāma,' and vying with each other at the top of their voices in a celestial combat.

But where was our Bābājī Mahāśaya gone? Lo, there he stood, leaning against the wall with eyes half-closed and a radiant smile upon his face, bathed in tears, swinging from side to side in a transport of delight and raising the forefinger of his right hand, as if pointing out something on high near by. Delicious scents came

¹⁶ (Please, turn to page 198)

floating in the air and they knew not from where, and supernatural joys were felt by those who took part in the *saṁkīrtana*

It was about midnight when the *saṁkīrtana* was brought to a close, and the devotees came up to the spot where our Bābājī stood to bow down to him and take the dust of his feet. There they found to their amazement, a pair of foot-prints clearly stamped upon the marble slab on the floor and a pool of water formed of tears and sweat collected in the depression marked on the slab.

This circumstance naturally created a sensation among the people of the neighbourhood and they came in crowds to ascertain the truth and pay homage to the saint. Bābājī Mahāsaya, of course, tried to make light of the affair. But Devendra Bābū came and said, "Dada! It is true, the footprints are there. I have seen them with my own eyes." Bābājī replied, "May be, I do not know. But this must be due to the *līlā* of Nītāi or the *śakti* of the Name. It is not fair to attribute it to any particular person."

Bābājī Mahāsaya, who by nature shunned name and fame, now began to think of leaving Kṛṣṇanagara. The next morning he started with his companions, dancing and singing:

*"Bhaja Nītāi Gaura, Rādhā-Śyāma,
Japa Hare Kṛṣṇa-Hare Rāma"*

When Bābājī Mahāsaya reached Dīknagara he heard men complaining about an unhappy event, which had recently occurred in the locality. There was an old banyan tree, and some Mohammedans had taken it into

their head to chop off some of its branches for some reason or another. The Hindus regarded the tree as sacred, and they were sorely aggrieved at the unsympathetic attitude of the Muslim brethren.

Next morning, Bābājī Mahāsaya set out with his train, as was his wont, dancing and singing the Name of the Lord. The villagers came in crowds and joined them on the way, and he led them straight to the banyan tree. There he marked the mischief that was done, passed round and round and prostrated himself before the tree and then marched asinging to the Mohammedan quarter of the town. He went his way, as if perfectly familiar with the lanes and by-lanes of the entire neighbourhood, and they soon found themselves in the residence of Hārādhana Mandala, a Mohammedan gentleman who enjoyed local reputation and had considerable influence over the Muslims of the place. The villagers of course feared a row, and they thought of desisting the *saṁkīrtana*-party from venturing into the quarter, but they could do nothing. There they were, in the courtyard of Hārādhana Mandala, and when he appeared, the band of singers like trained soldiers surrounded him on all sides and went on singing and dancing, oblivious of the world and anything else besides.

Suddenly, Bābājī Mahāsaya addressed himself to Hārādhana and roared:

"Say, 'Nītāi-Gaura Rādhā-Śyāma!'"

Hārādhana repeated, "Say Nītāi-Gaura Rādhā-Śyāma!"

Bābājī said again, "Say 'Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Rāma!'"

Hārādhana again repeated "Say Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Rāma!" and so on for some fifteen minutes. Hārādhana repeating what Bābājī suggested till tears streamed down

the cheeks and the flowing beard of Maṇḍala Sahib, and he began to dance—hands with the rosary of pebbles raised on high, and wooden sandals under his feet, and when Bābājī Mahāsaya came forward and clasped him to his chest, he was overpowered with joy and came down reeling to the ground beneath. The *samkirtana* closed round, and Bābājī breathed into his ears, and he trembled and rolled on the ground, and then, blanched with dust, he began to dance with renewed vigour in the midst of *samkirtana*. Off went his sandals he knew not where, the rosary slipped between his fingers he did not perceive, he fixed his eyes on the Bābājī, muttered in broken accents, and went on with his dance: and when our Bābājī left the scene and made for the banyan tree, he made one of the party and followed him, hardly knowing what he was doing and where he was going and why.

Now, this is hypnotism, one would say. May be, but our Bābājī was not a trained hypnotist for aught we know. The fact is, that these powers come, without any seeking—yes, they come to the man of Love—the power of raising any man and every man to the Kingdom of Heavenly Bliss, where all these petty dissensions are lulled into the harmony and repose of love and joy.

So they came back to the banyan, and went dancing and singing round and round the tree, when lo! what is this!—the very branches of the tree seemed to dance in tune with the *samkirtana* beneath. Can this be true?—They could scarcely believe their eyes. They cleared their eyes and looked again, but only to see what they saw before. The branches were indeed dancing—the branches just above the *samkirtana* below. At first they thought there might have been some birds flapping

their wings and moving the branches. But they had soon to give up this idea, for they noticed with surprise that the branches danced only where the *samkirtana* was going on, and that other branches danced while the former ones stopped as the *samkirtana* moved round and round. Rumour flew apace, and men and women came in crowds to witness the strange performance. The *samkirtana* continued till eleven o'clock in the morning, after which, when Bābājī Mahāsaya was about to retire, our friend Hārādhana requested him with tears in his eyes to be permitted to stay with him. Our Bābājī consoled him saying that he need not fear, for the grace of God was upon him, only he should see that the tree might not be defiled again in time to come. He gave the banyan the name of the 'Wish-tree,' and said that whoever would offer milk, Ganges water and *cirāga*¹⁶ in the evening at the feet of the tree, should have the fulfilment of his desires. Hārādhana pledged himself and his family to the sacred vow, whereupon our Bābājī embraced him heartily, and bidding him good-bye, returned with his *samkirtana* back to his lodgings.

But things like this cannot be readily swallowed by men of the present age, and there came censors and the connoisseurs—the educated and scientifically inclined men of the neighbourhood, who still doubted the testimony of the eye-witnesses on the scene. They had their honest doubts, and it was well that it was so, for these 'honest doubts' act as the cement of conviction, when careful experiment removes these doubts and reveals the truth.

¹⁶ Lamp, made of a small earthen pot with oil and wicks.

It was not long before Bābājī Mahāśaya heard all this, and he wished to show them that truth like gold shines brighter when put to the proof. Personal aspersions he would never mind—we have already seen so much of him in the earlier pages—but when any one of the verities was called in question, he would at once take up the challenge and prove it to the hilt that such doubts only arise out of the ignorance of the higher laws, that work inspite of the arrogant and adverse allegations of the shortsighted coxcombs and bigoted scientists.

Said the Bābājī in solemn accents, "I say, gentlemen, the Name of the Lord is Omnipotent: it is such a trifling thing to be accomplished by His Name—the dancing of the tree. Come and see, if you still have doubts, join the *saṁkīrtana*, and you shall have ample opportunity of verifying the truth once again."

Next morning Bābājī Mahāśaya set out with his *saṁkīrtana*-party, and those who were skeptically inclined accompanied him to the scene of the occurrence. It was about half past nine in the morning when they reached the banyan, and the men found to their astonishment that the tree danced again as the Lord's Name was sung beneath the branches. They saw it, and yet they would not believe. One of them stepped forward and asked the Bābājī if he had any objections to somebody climbing the tree for ascertaining the truth. He said he had none, provided no non-Brahmin should undertake the task. Two Brahmin boys were accordingly summoned to get up on the tree, with instructions to ransack the branches and see if there was any bird or monkey or any other animal that might have been swinging the branches that seemed to dance to the tune of the

saṁkīrtana. But, they could find nothing, and so it was finally established beyond the shadow of a doubt, and universally accepted as a truth—this dancing of the branches of the tree. They naturally attributed it to the power of the saint—more so, when they looked at our Muslim friend Harādhana Mandala, the leader of the Moham-medans regarded with fear by their Hindu neighbours—this Mandala, who had come again and was singing with tearful eyes along with the others in the *saṁkīrtana* party.

The same thing was repeated for seven consecutive days, and the branches danced whenever the Bābājī sang with his party under the banyan tree.

From Diknagar Bābājī Mahāśaya went to Bāvalā, Guptpārā, Sātgāchhiyā, Kālanā, and Gurapa. Wherever Bābā went, he went like one, who was well acquainted with the lanes and by-lanes of the place, without pausing anywhere, to look about or enquire from someone about the route.

This was his usual practice. He always reached the destination without making any inquiries, even if the place was new to him. If someone asked, "Are you acquainted with this place?" he replied, "If not I, Nītāi is. Nītāi and His Name are one. Nītāi is always with us in the form of His Name. Is there any place in the universe which is not known to Nītāi? Chanting the Name of Nītāi you can go anywhere and you will always reach the destination. If the Name fails to take us to the place where we want to go in the material world, how shall we believe that it can take us to the eternal spiritual world of our Lord? You need have no doubt that the Name cannot only carry us where we want, there is

nothing that the Name cannot do for us—if only we have a pure mind and faith in it.

In Gurapa Navadvīpa Dāsa was taken ill with high fever and cough. Towards the evening there came an astrologer and began to read everyone's hand. When he saw the hand of Navadvīpa Dāsa Bābājī, he was taken aback. He kept gazing at him for some time. Everyone thought that there was something extraordinary in the hand which may be very auspicious or very inauspicious. They wanted him to declare what it was. He said, "I shall let you know about it in private." But Bābājī Mahāśaya said, "Why in private? In this world good and evil go together and everything happens at the will of the Lord. So, there is no harm if you say it before the person whom it concerns."

The astrologer said, "I do not know what I should say. As far as I can see the life term of this young man has come to an end. If there were any means by which he could be saved I would have suggested, but his death is so sure that it cannot be prevented by any means."

Navadvīpa Dāsa laughed and said, "I knew this already. The astrologer who made my horoscope at the time of my birth was most competent. He had predicted from my horoscope that I would die in the first half of the month of Pauṣa in the year 1895. He also predicted the disease of which I would die."

The astrologer said, "As far as I can see you should die of fever and cough."

Navadvīpa said, "Yes, that astrologer had also said the same. But there is nothing to worry about this. For me it would be a matter of the greatest pleasure if I die in such good company."

But it was a matter of the greatest concern for all others, because Navadvīpa Dāsa was their life and soul. They could hardly live without him. They believed that Bābājī Mahāśaya could save him, but he looked so indifferent. When they asked him about Navadvīpa's fate, he said, "What do I know? Nītāi Cānd knows what He wants to do. Whatever He does is always for our good. You need not get agitated, chant *Harināma*."

Navadvīpa's condition worsened. Both fever and cough went on increasing, till one day he became so weak that he was not able to speak. Bābājī Mahāśaya asked everyone to surround him and perform *kirtana*. Navadvīpa looked at Bābājī Mahāśaya for the last time and somehow folded his hands to bid him farewell. Bābājī's eyes became wet. He shouted '*Jai Nītāi! Jai Nītāi!*' The next moment Navadvīpa breathed his last.

But Navadvīpa was not only the life and soul of every member of the party of Bābājī Mahāśaya, he was also the most beloved one of Bābājī himself. How could he let him go? He asked his companions to take him out of the room. They took him out. Bābājī Mahāśaya lifted him up and clasped him with both of his arms. Navadvīpa's head lay motionless on Bābājī's left shoulder and his eyes were turned upwards. All others wept as they sang *kirtana* around him. The *kirtana* went on, and after some time Navadvīpa Dāsa opened his eyes and lifted his head from the shoulder of Bābājī Mahāśaya looking all around. Then Bābājī Mahāśaya let him off and began to dance and say, '*Bol Nityānanda bol, Nityānanda bol!*' Others also shouted '*Bol Nityānanda bol, Nityānanda bol!*' Once more Bābājī Mahāśaya bed Navadvīpa Dāsa in his arms and let him off. The moment he let him off he also began to dance in ecstasy.

Dance and *kirtana* went on for some time. There was no end to everyone's happiness. When the *kirtana* was over Bābāji Mahāśaya said to Navadvīpa, "This time Nītai has given you a new lease on life. Go and roll in the dust where His *kirtana* was performed." Navadvīpa Dāsa smiled and said, "I know, you can kill or revive at your will." He then began to roll in the dust.

Bābā Mahāśaya set out for *Nagara-kirtana* in Gurapa. After passing a few more days in Gurapa he returned to Navadvīpa. One day Navadvīpa Dāsa introduced to him a boy of tender age and said, "His name is Rāma Dāsa. He has sweet voice and is blessed with a heart which is always overflowing with *Kṛṣṇa-prema*." Bābāji Mahāśaya embraced him and blessed him. Rāma Dāsa surrendered himself at his feet for ever.

At this time a plague epidemic was rampant in Calcutta. It was taking a heavy toll on life everyday. The bank of the Ganges was piled with corpses, and the whole city wore a weird look. People were running away to other places. But many, who could not, always felt that they were in the jaws of death. They only cried and prayed.

Nītai Cānd, who is always concerned with the spiritual well-being of the fallen souls, perhaps thought that the time was opportune for disengaging their minds from the meshes of *Māyā* and turning then towards Bhakti, for the seed of Bhakti sprouts easily if cast in moments of adversity.

Who could cast the seeds more effectively than Barhā Bābāji Mahāśaya. Therefore, it appears that Nītai, sitting in his heart entrusted him with the task. He decided to go to Calcutta with his party. They went by train.

The train reached Sealdah Station at about 5 p.m. As soon as Bābāji Mahāśaya came out of the station he saw dead bodies being carried here and there and grave anxiety written on the faces of people, who, finding no other means of escaping the jaws of death, were chanting the Name of the Lord and praying for mercy. Bābā Mahāśaya also started singing, *Bhaja Nītai-Gaura Rādhē-Śyāma, Japa Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Rāma*. His heart was filled with compassion for the people suffering from the scourge of plague. As he sang tears flowed from his eyes, and trembling, horriplation and other *sāttvika-bhāvas* appeared on his body. Attracted by his personality and *bhāva*, people began to come from different directions and join his *kirtana*. It all took the shape of a *kirtana*-procession. The procession moved on without any plan. It marched slowly through Darjiparha and reached the market of Deoyanparha.

A shop-keeper, whose name was Mukunda Ghoṣa, came out of the shop, made obeisance before the procession and said entreatingly to Bābā Mahāśaya, "Bābā! You and your party must grace my house and stay with me as long as you are in Calcutta." Bābā said, "If that is Nītai's plan, what objection can we have," and they moved into his house.

It was decided that the next day in the afternoon at about 4 p.m. they would go out for *Nagara-kirtana*. Mukunda Ghoṣa informed all the *kirtana* parties in the neighbourhood and through them the other parties far and near.

The parties began to collect at Mukunda Ghoṣa's place well before time and at 4 o'clock the *kirtana* started. Bābāji Mahāśaya was going ahead singing and dancing like one intoxicated. His companions and the

other *kirtana* parties sang and danced with him. The sound of *Haribol* accompanied by the sound of numerous *khol*s and *karatālas* rent the sky. As the *kirtana* advanced, more and more parties came and joined till it assumed the shape of a gigantic procession, such as the people of Calcutta had never seen before.

Bābā Mahāśaya was the tallest in the procession, so he could be easily seen. He was going along swinging with emotion like a mad elephant, who had drunk deep of the cup of divine love. His heart was filled with compassion for the suffering people, and tears streamed out of his eyes as he addressed himself to them and sang:

*"Chant, O chant the Name
over and over again,
If you want freedom
from suffering and pain.
No one knows when Yama
will frown,
Death will flap its wings
and sweep down.
It will reckon neither age nor time,
night or day.
It will come with a stroke and
sweep all away
Then your wife and children
your name and fame
Will not go with you, you will go
alone, as you came
So chant, O chant the Name
over and over again,
If you want freedom from
suffering and pain.*

Haribol, Haribol, Haribol, Haribol!"

Thus singing he embraced whomsoever he saw whether Hindu, Muslim or Christian, and his magic touch made them also shout '*Haribol, Haribol*' and dance and clap as they shouted.

At 10 p.m. Bābāji Mahāśaya stopped *kirtana* and returned to Ghoṣa's house. Even there many people followed him, the lawyers, the shopkeepers, the teachers, the students, the vendors and others. They forgot all about their homes and their respective duties, tempted as they were by the opportunity of having a little more of the soothing, alleviating and tranquilizing company of Bābā Mahāśaya. He, however, asked them gently to go home and come again to join the *kirtana* the next day.

Bābāji Mahāśaya stayed in Mukunda Ghoṣa's house for a month. Every day he went for *nagara-kirtana* to some new locality of Calcutta or its suburbs. The people of that locality were informed about it well in advance, and they made elaborate arrangements for his reception and the entertainment of his party and all those who participated in the *saṅkirtana*. The locality of the township was beautifully decorated, with buntings and gates, specially erected with bamboos and decorated with leaves, at intervals on the roads through which the *kirtana* procession had to pass. Arrangements were also made at different places for ice-water and *daba* (water of green coconut) to quench the thirst of the processionists. Countless joined the *saṅkirtana*, countless, including even those who had no faith in God and never chanted the Name of the Lord, sang and danced in *kirtana* and went into ecstasy.

Needless to say that not only the scourge of plague disappeared totally, but the city of Calcutta was swept by a new current of *bhāva-Bhakti*. Many surrendered themselves at the feet of Bābājī Mahāśaya and took initiation from him. Many turned a new leaf in their hectic and aimless life, which paved their way for ultimate deliverance.

The way in which Bābājī Mahāśaya disseminated the seeds of Bhakti wherever he went was natural. He did not give any sermons or deliver carefully prepared speeches on Bhakti or *prema*. He was himself an embodiment of *prema*. To see him was to realize that *prema* was the highest end and the culmination of all that was true, good, beautiful and blissful.

Barhā Bābājī Mahāśaya now decided to go back to Puri with his party of eighteen persons by steamer, because there was no railway line direct from Calcutta to Puri during those days.

The journey began. The steamer started steaming and Bābājī Mahāśaya started *samkirtana*. The Muslim captain of the steamer shouted, "What is that noise?"

"No noise," replied Bābā Mahāśaya, "but the chanting of the Holy Name. It will not do you any harm. On the other hand it will ward off evil and beget good for everyone."

"Stop it!" shouted the captain again.

So Bābā Mahāśaya stopped the *samkirtana*. Not very long after, a strong wind began to blow. The sea became turbulent and the waves began to splash the steamer and splatter. The passengers were alarmed and so was the captain. The captain saw that when the waves rose high and threatened to engulf the steamer

Bābājī Mahāśaya shouted "Jai Nītāi!" and immediately the waves subsided and the sea became calm. This happened a number of times. The captain then came running to Bābājī Mahāśaya and said apologetically, "Bābā! I am sorry I stopped your chanting. It is on account of that offense that providence has sent this storm to punish me. Kindly start your *kīrtana* again."

All other passengers, who had been watching the rise and fall of the waves at Bābā's bidding, as it were, with surprise also made the same request. *Samkirtana* again started, and the sea gradually became still, but no sooner had the steamer reached Kalapani than it was lashed by a much more severe storm. It began to be tossed up and down mercilessly by frenzied waves. The passengers were all but drowned. It appeared that the steamer was soon going to capsize. The captain and the passengers in their helplessness looked aghast at Bābājī Mahāśaya as the only hope of their survival. But Bābā sat calm and composed and confident that *Harināma* would take care of them all. He only asked them to chant more vigorously:

"Bhaja Nītāi-Gaura, Rādhā-Śyāma.

Japa Hare Kṛṣṇa-Hare Rāma."

Everyone including the captain joined him in the *kīrtana*. This continued for four hours. It seemed that a royal battle was being fought between *Harināma* and Nature. At the end Mother Nature had to surrender at the feet of *Harināma*. The storm was over, and the sky became clear. The passengers breathed a sigh of relief. The captain came and, humbly bowing at the feet of Bābājī Mahāśaya, said, "It is only by your mercy that our lives have been saved, otherwise in a furious storm like this there was no chance at all of our survival."

Bābā said, "Not my mercy Captain Sahib, the mercy of the Name. The power of the Name is infinite. There is no difference between the Name and the Lord. The Lord has infinite forms and infinite Names. Mahammad, Khuda, Allah, Śiva, Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa, Nītāi and Gaura are all His Names. There is substantially no difference between them. The difference is only in manifestation of *śakti* and *bhāva*."

The steamer reached Cāndbali from where the party took a boat for Cuttack.

When the boat reached Cuttack, a number of people were already waiting at the sea-coast to receive Barhā Bābājī Mahāśaya. They requested him to stay in Cuttack for some time, but he could not stay there for more than a few days on account of the Ratha-Yātrā festival. His short stay in Cuttack, however, marked the beginning of the end of widespread prejudice amongst the people against Vaiṣṇavas. The people of Cuttack—specially the intelligentsia—were under the influence of Brahma Samaja,¹⁷ and for the first time perhaps, they got an opportunity to see genuine Vaiṣṇavas, before whom they could not but bow down in respect. Such respect was gradually converted into love, which later turned into worship, as testified by the Rasabihari Maṭha¹⁸ in Cuttack, where a life-size image of Barhā Bābājī Mahāśaya is even today worshipped independently alongside the deities of Lord Gaurāṅga, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.¹⁹

After enrapturing and entrancing the people of

Cuttack Bābā Mahāśaya started for Puri. The postmaster of Cuttack had already informed Gopāla Bābu, the headclerk of the Puri post office about the arrival of Bābā Mahāśaya there. The news had spread all over and the people of Puri were in ecstasy on the prospect of finding their own Bābājī Mahāśaya in their midst. So when the train reached Puri at night a host of devotees and admirers of Bābājī were present at the station to receive him with garlands. Bābājī gave each of them a loving embrace and then proceeded to the temple of Jagannātha singing and dancing.

After performing *saṃkīrtana* at the temple Bābā went out and sat on the *snāna-maṇḍapa* surrounded by many people. Many people had brought *prasāda*, which Balarāma Bābū collected and served to everyone. After *prasāda* Bābā Mahāśaya and his party retired to the vacant house of Hanścandra Basu, in which Balarāma had made arrangements for their stay.

The next day at night Bābājī Mahāśaya and his party were invited for *kīrtana* at the house of Harvallabha, an advocate. At sunset they reached his house singing, *Bheja Nītāi-Gaura Rādhā-Śyāma, Japa Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Rāma*. Many lawyers and other important persons, including some *sannyāsīs* from Rāmakṛṣṇa Mission had assembled at the house. They were all eager to listen to the *kīrtana* of Bābā Mahāśaya. Many of them had some questions to ask, which they thought they would ask him after the *kīrtana* was over. Some wanted to know whether he believed in Vedānta or not, and with that end in view they had prepared a number of questions. Harvallabha Bābū wanted to examine whether he bore any grudge or ill will against any particular sect or person or not.

¹⁷ It was a new movement which looked askance at Vaiṣṇavism.

¹⁸ *Maṭha* is a kind of monastery.

¹⁹ This was against the wish of Barhā Bābājī Mahāśaya himself, who was most vehemently opposed to all attempts at his deification.

Bābā Mahāśaya performed dance and *kīrtana* for half an hour and sat down. He took only a few seconds to read the questions in the minds of the people and then started *kīrtana* again. We have said before that he rarely sang songs previously prepared by himself or by others. He had the supernatural gift of singing extempore according to the requirements of the situation in which he was placed by providence. So this time the *kīrtana* had to be of a very special kind. It was not *rasa-kīrtana* or *līlā-kīrtana*, but it was philosophical in content. At first the *kīrtana* related to questions regarding Vedānta, like what is the relationship between *jñāna* (knowledge) and *Bhakti*? What are the different kinds of *jñāna*? How does a real *jñāni* behave? Bābā himself raised these questions in his *kīrtana* one by one and answered them. At first people thought that verses of this kind already existed and he was only repeating them in his *kīrtana*. Soon it became clear that there were no such verses and that he had the rare gift of composing them as he sang. The Vedantists, who were sitting at some distance now came nearer and began to listen to the *kīrtana* with greater attention. There was no end to their surprise. The very questions they had thought of asking, and which they regarded as most difficult, were being answered systematically and convincingly through *kīrtana*. Others also got satisfactory answers to the questions they had wanted to ask. The *kīrtana* went on to expound the great sayings of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavad-gītā* like 'adveṣṭā sarva-bhūtānam,' 'samam sarveṣu bhūteṣu..', 'sarva dharmān parityajya mām ekaṃ śaraṇam vraja,' symbolizing the synthesis of all religions. That removed all doubts of Harivallabha Bābū and his friends regarding the large mindedness and catholicity of Bābājī Mahāśaya.

Thus *kīrtana* went on till 11.30 p.m. At the end all began to sing together, 'Bhaja Nitāi-Gaura, Rādhā-Śyāma, Japa Hare Kṛṣṇa-Hare Rāma.' This time the *sannyāsīs*, the lawyers and all others also joined the *kīrtana*. They danced and sang, clapping their hands as they danced. Everyone was thrilled and transported. No one wanted that the *kīrtana* should stop. But Bābā Mahāśaya stopped it at 12 o'clock, so that no inconvenience was caused to them.

They came near and offered obeisances to him and began to express their gratitude and surprise at his removing their doubts and satisfactorily answering their questions without their asking them. Bābā Mahāśaya replied with characteristic humility, "Brethren, you should express your gratitude to Nitāi Cānd, not me. He is omniscient and He knew your questions and answered them. I am only a tool in His hands."

One day a gentleman named Pyāri Bābū invited Bābā Mahāśaya and his party for *prasāda*. After they had taken *prasāda* he said to Bābā Mahāśaya prayerfully, "Would you kindly tell me what a fallen soul like me should do so that he can make steady progress in the path of God-realization?"

Bābājī: For weak, imbecile, sinful and Māyā-bound *jīvas* like us the only remedy is *nāma-saṁkīrtana*."

Pyāri: "But there are many Names of the Lord. Like Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Dvārakanātha, Gopāla, Gīrḍhārī, Rādhārāmaṇa, Gopīvallabha, and so on. Which of these Names should one take?"

Bābājī: "There are so many Names because the Lord is infinite. He has infinite forms. Each form has a Name, which is identical with the form. The Name

is the Lord Himself in that form. There have to be infinite forms, because there are devotees of different kinds, and their likings and dispositions are different. One has to choose a particular form according to his liking and fix his mind firmly on it."

Pyārī: "How can one set one's mind firmly on the form of God one likes? Mind by its very nature is unfixed. It moves always from one object to another."

Bābājī: "The only way of fixing the mind is through *prema* or love. If you love your Lord with all your heart and soul, your mind will automatically turn from the other things and remain always fixed on the Lord."

Pyārī: "How do you get *prema*?"

Bābājī: "*Prema* is eternally realized (*nitya-siddha*), it cannot be attained by any *sādhana* (spiritual discipline). It is a jewel that shines by its own light. Neither *śravaṇa*²⁰ nor *kīrtana*, nor other means can 'generate' *prema*. All spiritual disciplines aim mainly at the purity of the heart. When the heart is purified, *prema*-which is already there, becomes manifest.

Pyārī: "But Mahārāja, I would like to know one thing. If someone is so fallen and weak that he can neither practise Rāgānugā-Bhakti nor Vaidhī-Bhakti, is there no way by which he can attain the lotus feet of the Lord?"

Bābājī: "Why not? Take the example of a similar situation in the mundane sphere. Suppose you are the owner of a big estate, which has to be managed well and there are a number of cases concerning the estate in the court, but you are illiterate or mentally and physically

²⁰ Listening to the description of the Names, form, attributes or the *mā* of the Lord.

so weak that you cannot do anything, then what will you do?"

Pyārī: "It is easy. I shall give attorneyship to a capable person, who will do everything for me."

Bābājī: "The same is true of the spiritual world. If you are not capable of doing anything, you should give attorneyship to someone, who is capable of doing everything for you. You should surrender yourself completely and sincerely, and depend wholly upon him. It would be his responsibility to see that you realize Kṛṣṇa."

Pyārī: "Does it mean that in that case one need not do any *sādhana*?"

Bābājī: "In that case one should try as far as possible to practice the *sādhana* prescribed by the guru. But if he cannot practise it, he should not do anything that is against the precepts of the guru or the injunctions of the *śāstras*. Guru is like the boatman, who promises to carry you across the ocean. He rows and asks you to row, so that you reach the destination more quickly. But if you cannot row as he wants, you must not row haphazardly in different directions. You should remain sitting quietly, with faith and confidence that he will take you across, sooner or later."

Pyārī Bābū then fell at the feet of Bābājī Mahāśaya with tears in his eyes and said with a voice choked with emotion, "Bābā! I am a fallen creature, who is drowning in the ocean of Māyā, and is fighting helplessly with the waves. I do need a boatman to take me across. I do not know how and where to find one. I therefore, surrender myself completely at your feet. Kindly accept me as your servant for ever and ever, and never leave me."

Bābā Mahāśaya said, "Do not worry. You are mine."

Barhā Bābājī Mahāśaya was a skilled builder of human personality. Like a skilled sculptor he shaped and moulded everyone whom he met, whether atheist or theist, sinner or saint, *jñāni* or yogi into the mould of *śuddhā* (pure) Bhakti. His strategy was simple. He first established a rapport with the new man by giving him a loving embrace, then he peeped into his heart. If he found there any angularity that would not let him fit into the mould of pure Bhakti, unmixed with *jñāna*, karma or yoga, he tried to round it off by appropriate means. A typical example of this is the metamorphosis of Bābā Basanta Kumara Dāsa, a Hatha-yogi, who was proud of his attainments in yoga and looked contemptuously upon Bhakti. An interesting account of how in a trice he was cast into the mould of Bhakti by Bābājī Mahāśaya is given in *Carita Sudhā*²¹ in his own words, which are as follows:

"I went to Jagannātha Purī at the time of Ratha-Yātrā in the year 1897. I saw that a group of people, who looked neither like *sādhus*, nor *sannyāsīs*, nor *grhasthas* (householders), were dancing and singing aloud:

*'Bhaja Nītā-Gaura Rādhā-Śyāma,
Japa Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Rāma*

²⁰ Listening to the description of the Names, form, attributes or the *līlā* of the Lord.

²¹ The original biography of Śrī Rādhāramaṇa Carāṇa Dāsa Deva called *Carita Sudhā* in Bengali was written by Lalitā Sakhi, one of his disciples, who was herself a *siddha* saint, shortly after his disappearance when thousand of people, who were eye-witnesses to his *līlā* were alive. An abridged English edition of *Carita Sudhā* consisting of 550 pages was produced by the present author and published in 1993, under the title *The Life of Love*.

"All of them wore a *tulasī-kañthī* around their neck and *tīlaka* on their forehead. On their body they wore a *cādara* (a sheet of cloth) in such a manner that it covered them up to the feet. In their midst there was a tall person, who particularly attracted my notice. I concluded from the *aprākṛta* (transcendental) *bhāva* that seemed to radiate from his face that he was a *mahāpuruṣa*. His *darśana* aroused an inexplicable feeling in my heart and I kept on looking at him like one who was under a spell. After some time the group came dancing and singing near me. I bowed down to them with reverence. As I did so, the *mahāpuruṣa* also bowed down to me and gave me a loving embrace. Oh! the magic of that divine touch, the soothing effect it had, the thrill it sent in my body. I felt as if I was completely sold out to him. I kept standing like one who was at a fix and did not know what to do. The *mahāpuruṣa* took me along with him to the Temple of Jagannātha. There they performed *samkirtana* for some time and then they proceeded to the Kotabhoga Maṭha, where they were invited for *mahāprasāda*. They took me along with them. We were made to sit in a room of the Maṭha. Soon after it began to rain torrentially. The courtyard of the Maṭha was filled with water, which was knee-deep. A little later we were called for *mahāprasāda*, which was to be served in a room on the other side of the courtyard. The *mahāpuruṣa* exclaimed like a child, 'I will not wade through water. Someone should take me there in his lap.' Such was the magic of his words that in spite of his massive figure, I had to say, 'Come, I will take you there in my lap.' Immediately he sprang like a child into my lap. I felt that he was light like a doll made of cork.

and I had no difficulty at all in carrying him. But I had just crossed the courtyard when he became so heavy that it was impossible for me to carry him even a step further. I had to make him get down in the verandah, instead of taking him inside the room. The *mahāpuruṣa* made me sit by his side in the dining room. The *mahāprasāda* was served and we were asked to start eating after *Harī-dhvanī*. The *mahāpuruṣa* then took three or four peppers and a small quantity of each of the other things from his plate and mixed them all into a lump. He put a portion of it into my mouth with his own hand. It was so pungent that as soon as I swallowed it I felt that my mouth, throat and stomach were burning. Tears came out of my eyes. The *mahāpuruṣa* said, 'Oh! It is troublesome. Then take this, it will be soothing.' So saying he put another morsel into my mouth from the same mixture. Oh! It was so soothing, so delicious and sweet-smelling! I have never eaten such a thing before. How wonderful! In both cases it was one and the same thing affecting in two different ways at one and the same time. I had seen so many saints in my life, but never one with power to do such impossible things. I understood that the *mahāpuruṣa* had performed this *līlā* only to humble me. The pride of my yogic attainments was now gone, and along with it was gone my contempt for Bhakti. I was convinced, as I had heard sometime before, that all the different *siddhis*, which the yogi attained after a long course of arduous exercises, came to a devotee of their own, even though he never wanted or tried for them. I surrendered myself completely at the feet of the *mahāpuruṣa* and began to live with him, and do as he ordained, for the rest of my life."

Once Bābājī Mahāśaya was going with his *samkirtana* party along the highway of the city of Purī, when a bitch was found sitting on the road, giving out piteous outcries which attracted the notice of our Bābājī Mahāśaya. He stopped short in the middle of the *samkirtana*, and inquiring about the cause of her distress, came to know that she was mourning for her four puppies, taken away from her to be reared by some gentleman of another part of the city.

She was sorely aggrieved and could not be persuaded to take food or drink. Bābājī Mahāśaya approached her, bowed down to her, and started sermonizing her thus: "Mā, this is after all the way of the world. The union of friends and relatives is inevitably followed by separation. All beings are in the hands of God, bound to live and move as He wishes. Attachments of all kinds—filial, affectionate and all the rest arise out of ignorance of our true selves in duty bound to serve our Lord. Being born as you are in the Blessed Land of the Lord, and having already had enough of the world to be tired of, it is high time that you should turn to godly ways of life—hearing the Name of the Lord in the company of devotees, and partaking of nothing but the *mahāprasāda* to keep you alive. Now Mā, if you accompany us to our lodging, you will have a hundred sons in the person of myself and my attendants instead of the four you have lost by chance. There you would find all possible care and comfort at our hands." The bitch looked steadfastly in his face as he was thus speaking to her, and then when Bābājī Mahāśaya went on, she followed as she heard him say, "Come with us, and you shall have *mahāprasāda*." The devotees were struck with wonder to see and hear all this, and they all took

the dust of the road where she was seated to bless their soul with it.

The bitch came. She was served with *mahāprasāda* every day. She would go with Bābājī Mahāśaya wherever he went at the head of his *saṁkīrtana* party. She would never partake of anything but *mahāprasāda*, even when other kinds of food were offered to her. She would sound like the blowing of conches, when evening *ārati* service was going on in the temple, and would uplift her forefeet and cry out 'Ho! Ho!' whenever Bābājī Mahāśaya shouted 'Haribol!' at the pitch of his voice.

One day Bābājī Mahāśaya decided to go out for *nagara-kīrtana*. He first went to the house of Gopāla Bābū, the headclerk of the local post-office, so that he might also participate in it. His party followed him dancing and singing. As the *kīrtana* was going on in the courtyard of Gopāla Bābū's house, Gopāla Bābū took Navadvīpa Dāsa aside and said, "I have to go to the post office earlier today on account of some important work. So, I cannot accompany *kīrtana*." Navadvīpa Dāsa said, "Then you bow down to the *kīrtana* and go to the office, and we go out for *nagara-kīrtana*."

Just when Gopāla Bābū was about to start for the office, Bābājī Mahāśaya took the *khol* out of the neck of Jai Gopāla and put it round Gopāla Bābū's neck. What could Gopāla Bābū do? The *saṁkīrtana*-party moved and he moved along with it, playing on the *khol*. Others in the party got anxious about him and thought of relieving him somehow. But Bābājī Mahāśaya liked him playing on the *khol* so much that he always kept him near him in *saṁkīrtana*. This time also he was so close to him that no one had the courage to do anything to relieve him.

The *kīrtana*-party circumambulated the Jagannātha Temple and proceeded towards Harchandisai, the place where only the *pandas* and *pujāris* of Jagannātha live. The *saṁkīrtana* was so thrilling and enchanting that all of them came running and began to sing and dance in it. Their children danced joyfully in front of the *kīrtana*. Everyone was in ecstasy. The *kīrtana*-party went to Toṭa Gopinātha and the *saṁādhi* of Haridāsa Ṭhākura, and marching through the road leading to the court, reached back the *āsrama* at about one o'clock. Gopāla Bābū then kept the *khol* aside and made obeisance before Bābājī Mahāśaya. Looking at him Bābā said with a start, "Gopāla! Didn't you have to go to the office?"

"Yes, I had to go," replied Gopāla Bābū.

"So, what is the time now?"

"It is one o'clock."

"It is one o'clock and you have not yet gone! Will you not get in trouble?"

"How can I say? You know all about that."

"At what time do you go to the office every day?"

"At ten, and sometimes even earlier. Today I had to go at nine."

Bābā Mahāśaya was taken aback, but he said, "However, Nītāi Cānd wishes that you do not go to the office at all today," Gopāla Bābū obeyed.

He went to the office the next day and started his work. Nobody said anything. The postmaster was all the time talking of Bābājī Mahāśaya and praising him. At the end Gopāla Bābū went to sign the attendance register. While signing he thought, "Since no one has said anything to me about yesterday's absence it is obvious that Bābājī Mahāśaya himself came to the office

in my guise and did all my work. Did he not prove thereby that I was not absent? Why shouldn't I, therefore sign the register for yesterday as well, as if I forgot to sign yesterday?" So he turned the page and signed for the previous day as well.

When Gopāla Bābū returned from the office, he told everything to Bābājī Mahāśaya. Bābājī Mahāśaya said, "If absolute surrender to *Harināma* and faith in its unlimited power can solve all problems relating to the spiritual world, why can't it solve the trifling problems of this world. What is necessary is faith. If *Harināma* does not give any result it is because we are lacking faith."

Gopāla Bābū fell at the feet of Bābājī Mahāśaya and said with tears in his eyes, "Prabhu! I am a sinner and I do not do any *bhajana*, yet you take so much trouble for me. Kindly forgive all my offenses and bless me so that birth after birth I get the shelter of your lotus-feet." Bābājī Mahāśaya lifted him up and hugged him thereby assuring him that his prayer would be fulfilled. Others sitting near him shouted together, '*Jai Nityānanda!*'

One day Kisorī Mohana Sena, the local subjudge and Bābū Jagatcandra Roy, the local deputy magistrate came to Bābājī Mahāśaya. Kisorī Bābū said to him, "I beg to propose that you should have a Maṭha of your own. It is not good that you should always be moving from one place to another and be dependent on others."

Bābājī Mahāśaya: What you call dependence, Kisorī Bābū, is really independence. I am not bound to a particular place and I can freely go where I like. If I own a Maṭha it will not be possible for me to move about freely. I shall have to make proper arrangement for the Maṭha

before I think of going anywhere. Why should I take that botheration upon myself?

Kisorī Bābū: You tell us that devotional service is the highest *dharma*. It is not possible to attain the Lord as easily through any other means as through *sevā* (service). What I actually want to propose will provide you with excellent opportunity for service. You see, there is a Maṭha here, which was established by Sevādāsa Bābājī, a *siddha* saint on the advice of his guru, Śrī Narottama Dāsa Thākura Mahāśaya, the great saint and disciple of Śrī Lokanātha Gosvāmī. The last in the discipic succession of Narottama Thākura, who was the *sevāite* of the Maṭha, was Adhikarī Kṛṣṇa Dāsa. Kṛṣṇa Dāsa is dead and there is no one left to receive the property. All moveable property of the Maṭha, including Rādhākānta and other deities have been shifted to the police-office and are in their custody. If you agree to receive the Maṭha I can do something about it. The Maṭha is called '*Jhāṇapitā Maṭha*.' It is also called '*Viraktasiddha Āśrama*.'

But Bābā Mahāśaya did not agree.

Another day Kisorī Bābū and Jagatcandra Roy met Bābā Mahāśaya when he and his companions were going dancing and singing as usual, to Rādhākānta Maṭha, where they were invited for *prasāda*.

Kisorī Bābū said, "Bābā! You are going to Rādhākānta Maṭha for taking *prasāda*, but your *Prāṇavallabha* has been lying there [police-post], unattended and unfed for over a month. Day-after tomorrow He will be auctioned along with the other properties of the Maṭha. No one knows in whose hands They will go and what Their fate will be. The very thought of it breaks my heart. But I wonder how you have all along been so indifferent to it?

Bābā Mahāśaya could not remain unmoved. He burst into tears like a child and said, "I feel so helpless. I do not know what to do."

Kīśorī Bābū said, "You do not have to do anything. You have only to give us your consent for what we do."

"You do what you like," said Bābāji.

Jhānjapitā Maṭha was cleaned and arrangements were made to carry the deities in the right royal manner in a palanquin with a *kīrtana* party performing in front of the palanquin and a large number of devotees, who had assembled there on hearing about the homecoming of the deities, following the palanquin. On reaching the Maṭha the *abhīṣeka* (bathing ceremony) of the deities was duly performed. They were properly dressed and fed. Bābā Mahāśaya and his companions began to live in the Maṭha.

Once an English man, who was a Christian priest, went to see Bābāji Mahāśaya. He, as usual, received him with a loving embrace and made him sit by his side. The priest was both surprised and impressed. After making some courteous inquiries he said, "May I know what your religion is?"

Bābāji, in a very general way I would say that my religion is what you may know as Hindu religion. But amongst the Hindus there are five main different classes. Śakta, Śaiva, Gāṇapatya, Saura and Vaiṣṇava. I am a Vaiṣṇava.

Priest: Whom do you worship?

Bābāji: We worship Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and Nītāi-Gaura.

The priest then started narrating *Kṛṣṇa-līlā* with special reference to those parts of the *līlā*, which he

thought were disgraceful. He described Kṛṣṇa's stealing the butter of the *gopīs*, His stealing away their clothes while they were bathing und clothed in the Yamunā River, His *rāsa-līlā* and other amorous pastimes with them in the Yamunā and the bowers of Vraja. He also described Kṛṣṇa's killing of Pūtānā and Vatsāsura and other *līlās*.

He was describing and Bābā Mahāśaya was quietly listening. He was stunned and stupefied to see how from time to time Bābā Mahāśaya's body trembled like a tree stormed by tempest, hair stood erect on their ends like thorns and streams of tears incessantly flowed from his eyes. After he had described the *līlās* he began to point out the faults in Kṛṣṇa's character. He said, "So you see, the God Whom you worship is a debauch, a liar, a thief and a killer." Still he did not see any change in the expressions of Bābā Mahāśaya. He was amazed, he said, "I said so much against your God and religion, but you were not angry. Instead you showed signs of ecstatic joy and blissfulness. Why so? If you say anything against my religion or Christ, I would feel very unhappy."

Bābā replied, "Our Bhagavān is not only *pūrṇa* (perfect), but *pūrṇatama* (perfection at its highest). Imperfection or any fault or vice cannot even touch Him. What appear to you as His faults are His embellishments, what appears as His weaknesses or imperfections are the very signs of His perfection, because He is essentially Love, and whatever He does is an expression of His love—Love that is transcendental, pure and selfless. He says in *Padma Purāṇa* '*madbhaktānam vinodartham karomi vividhaḥ kṛiyāḥ*—Whatever I do, I do in order to please My devotees, and not for self-enjoyment.' He says in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*: '*aḥam*

bhaktapareḍhino hyasvatantra iva dvija—I have no freedom. I am completely subjugated by My devotees.' He is so much under their subjection on account of their love that He can even lie or steal, or do anything that is generally looked upon as immoral to please them. This is why He is so sweet and attractive. He would not be perfect if He were not so.

"Looked at from another point of view—the metaphysical point of view—however, He does not lie, when He actually seems to lie, because He is the essence of truth and what He says must be true. For instance, He seems to lie when after eating earth as a child, He says to Mother Yaśodā that He did not eat it. Actually, He does not lie, because everything including the earth is already within Him. Who can say that the earth, which He seemed to eat, and in fact the whole earth planet was not already in His mouth? Did not Mā Yaśodā actually see it, when she asked Him to open His mouth? Similarly, how can He steal anything, when there is nothing that does not already and truly belong to Him? How can He be accused of seduction or adultery in His amorous pastimes with the *gopīs*, when there is not a single woman that does not already and truly belong to Him, of whom He is not the *parama-patī* (Supreme Husband)? Lying and stealing, etc., are only His *prema-līlā* or love pastimes."

Priest: Well, that may be as you say, but what will you say about Kṛṣṇa's killings? You regard cow-slaughter as the worst sin, yet you regard Kṛṣṇa, the killer of cows as your God. Our Christ never harmed anyone. He even sacrificed himself for the sake of others.

Bābājī: Christ was truly a *mahāpuruṣa*, who was specially favoured by God. We shall not hesitate even

in saying that he was an incarnation of God. It is against our religion to calumniate any other religion or person. But you are not right when you call Kṛṣṇa a killer. Kṛṣṇa did not kill or do harm to anyone. When the demons started coming to Vraja in various forms and oppressing innocent men, women and children, Kṛṣṇa demolished their devilish existence and gave them *mukti* (freedom from bondage of *Māyā*). He never killed any cow. On the other hand He was the supreme protector of cows. But when the demons came in the form of a bull or a calf He killed them, and by killing delivered them from that sinful existence.

Priest: I would like to know whether according to you, God can be worshipped in some particular form or in any form that one may choose?

Bābājī: God is infinite. He has infinite forms. All the things that exist are the various forms of God. There is difference only in the degree in which God is manifest in them. In His incarnations He is manifest more fully than in any other thing, though the incarnations also differ in the degree in which He is particularly manifest in them. But all His incarnations are His forms. There is no difference between Kṛṣṇa, Allāh, Khudā or Christ. For God all religions are His religions and He favours all those who love Him, irrespective of their caste and creed. Our Jagannātha Deva is worshipped by the followers of different religions in different forms. The Buddhists worship Him as Buddha, the Brahma Samajis as Ōmkāra, while others worship Him as Nārāyaṇa, Dvārakānātha or Nandanandana (Kṛṣṇa, the son of Nanda), and He favours them all accordingly. Even the Mohammedans are not denied His favour. The *śāstras* say that He also accepts the food prepared by a Mohammedan.

The priest was fully satisfied. He said, "I have no more doubts I am convinced that Vaiṣṇava religion is the highest religion. I have travelled so much and met so many saints, but no one has impressed me so much I feel that after meeting you I am not only richer in my knowledge of Vaiṣṇava religion, but of religion as such."

The priest then placed a ten rupee note before Bābāji Mahāśaya and said, "I shall be obliged if you kindly offer some food to Jagannātha Deva on my behalf."

Navadvīpa Dāsa said, "Give the note to me, for he does not touch money."

The priest gave the note to Navadvīpa Dāsa. Bābā Mahāśaya asked the devotees to add fifteen more rupees to it. A number of delicious things were offered to Jagannātha and the *prasāda* was given to the priest, when he went there again the next day. He took off his hat and bowed down to *prasāda* and ate it with great relish.

The priest liked Bābāji Mahāśaya so much that he continued to go and meet him almost every day as long as he lived in Purī.

Once Barhā Bābāji Mahāśaya was going, singing and dancing along with a number of devotees, to Jagannātha Temple, after circumambulating the *samādhi* of Vijaya Kṛṣṇa Gosvāmī Mahāśaya on the bank of the Narendre Sarovara. As soon as he reached Sudarśanavallabha, the old house of Vijaya Kṛṣṇa Gosvāmī, he lay prostrate on the ground and began to roll and weep. At that time there came a disciple of Vijaya Kṛṣṇa Gosvāmī Mahāśaya and began to kick him right and left. Bābāji Mahāśaya's companions kept on looking and began to

weep in utter helplessness. They could not say anything to the man for fear of incurring the displeasure of Bābāji Mahāśaya. But Bābāji Mahāśaya stood up and began to dance in ecstasy, and embrace the assaulting man. At that time there was such effulgence of light from his face and body that his companions could hardly look at him. He held the man by the arm, and dancing and singing in a state of trance, entered the Simhadvāra of Jagannātha Temple. The man, however, not satisfied with what he had done so far, began to throw dust on the face of Bābāji Mahāśaya with both hands. While Bābāji Mahāśaya's other companions continued looking at him angrily but helplessly, Nityasvarūpa Brahmācari could not tolerate this. He held the man's arm and began to reproach him for his outlandish and barbarous behaviour, but Bābāji Mahāśaya reproached him in turn. He said soothing words to the man and sent him home after giving him a loving embrace.

A *mahāpuruṣa*, who is by nature benevolent and forgiving, does not take anyone's offense. However the Lord, Who loves His pure devotees more than His own self, cannot forgive a person, who does any harm to them. As the Lord wished it, therefore, the man developed high fever that very night. He experienced such excruciating pain in those very parts of his body which corresponded to the parts of Bābāji Mahāśaya's body he had struck, that he could not sleep the whole night. The fire of repentance burnt his whole body. The next morning he went running and fell at the feet of Bābāji Mahāśaya and said, "I am a great sinner I have committed a great offense at your feet. God has therefore punished me, and I have been suffering miserably ever since I

returned home yesterday I do not know what my fate is going to be, if you do not forgive me." So saying he began to weep bitterly

Bābājī Mahāśaya clasped him close to his heart and said, "I can say on oath that I have not taken any offense on account of your behaviour. You take *Harināma* and be at peace."

But the man would not be convinced and would not stop weeping and wailing. Bābā Mahāśaya then took pity on him and said, "Look here, if you really feel that you have done some wrong, then go and submit to your guru. It is the guru, who feels offended if his disciple does any wrong, and he alone can forgive him. If he is pleased and forgives, no one else can do any harm to him, not even Kṛṣṇa. Has not Sanātana Gosvāmī said in his *guru-vandanā*.

*"If Kṛṣṇa is displeased, the guru can protect.
If guru is displeased, Kṛṣṇa cannot protect.*

When one surrenders to the guru, the guru takes him under his protection. He alone can favour or disfavour him, punish or reward him, no one else."

So, the disciple went to the *samādhi* of Vijaya Kṛṣṇa Gosvāmī Mahāśaya, lay himself prostrate before it and wept and prayed. Afterwards, everyday before going to the sea for bath, he also went to Bābājī Mahāśaya and requested him for pardon.

Both Govinda Dādā and Navadvīpa Dādā had *sakhya* (friendly) *bhāva* towards Bābā Mahāśaya. This is borne out by an interesting episode, which is as follows:

According to the instructions of Bābā Mahāśaya the daily routine of his companions in the Jhānjapātā Maṭha was *trisandhyā-kīrtana* (*kīrtana* in the morning,

noon and evening), sea-bath, Jagannātha *darśana* and *kīrtana* before Jagannātha *Mādhukarī-bhikṣā* for the Maṭha was usually done by Madhu Dādā. But sometimes Bābā Mahāśaya asked others as well to go for *bhikṣā*.²² One day he called Navadvīpa Dādā and Govinda Dādā and said, "Both of you go for *bhikṣā* in the lanes and bylanes of the city and on your return give everything you get in *bhikṣā* to me." So, everyday they went for *bhikṣā* and on their return gave the bag containing *bhikṣā* to Bābājī Mahāśaya. Bābā Mahāśaya bowed down to the bag, and put it over his head as something most sacred and valuable before he gave it to Lalitā Dāsī for cooking. This continued for a number of days. One day, as Navadvīpa and Govinda returned from *bhikṣā*, chanting the Name, Bābā Mahāśaya came out of his room and took the bag containing the *bhikṣā* from the hands of Govinda. As he did so humorous Govinda Dādā, animated by *sakhya-rasa* (friendly sentiment) showered a volley of abuse upon him and went and sat down in the *pangat-ghara* (dining room). Everyone in the Maṭha was surprised to hear this. Bābā Mahāśaya remained listening quietly and amazedly with the bag held over his head. After sometime he went to the *pangat-ghara* and said to Govinda Dādā, "Govinda! Have you gone mad?"

Govinda: Why? What has happened?

Bābājī: Why did you deliver abuses while surrendering the *bhikṣā*?

Govinda: The abuses were given to me by the people to whom I had gone for *bhikṣā*. You had enjoined

²² On special occasions Bābājī Mahāśaya himself went out for *bhikṣā*.

that whatever I got in *bhikṣā* I must deliver to you. I delivered to you rice, pulses and the other things I got. How could I keep the abuses with me? If I did, it would have been difficult for me to digest them. They could have aroused in my mind the feeling of hatred or anger against the people, who abused me. So, I delivered them to you."

Bābā Mahāśaya expressed happiness at Govinda's attitude of intimate loving friendliness, free from fear or hesitation, by smiling and giving him a loving embrace.

One day, when Navadvīpa Dādā and Govinda Dādā were going for *bhikṣā* through a lane adjoining the royal palace, chanting *Harināma* as usual, the guard on duty at the palace shouted, "O Bābā! Chanting *Harināma* in this area is prohibited. Go away from here." Navadvīpa Dādā smiled and said, "Why Bābā? Does not the rule and order of Yama (the regent of death) prevail here? *Harināma* is effective against Yama." He said this and continued to chant. The guard vituperated and threatened to beat them. Still they continued chanting, caring little for his threat, and chanting came out of the lane.

The Lord may tolerate an offense committed against His own Self, but He cannot tolerate the offense committed against His Name or His devotees. Soon after this episode cholera broke out in Pūrī and it affected most of the area in and around the palace, so much so that the Mahārāja himself fell prey to it. He called his guru Śrīpāda Raghunātha Deo Gosvāmī and his minister Kālī Bābū and said, "I am laid up with cholera, medicines have proved ineffective. I do not know what to do." Raghunātha Deva Gosvāmī said, "If medicines have failed, the only other remedy is *Harināma*. I have seen that on two

or three occasions, when an epidemic broke out in Pūrī, it disappeared as soon as Śrī Rādhāramaṇa Carṇa Dāsa Deva went round the city performing *nāma-kīrtana* with his companions. I believe that if he performs *kīrtana* in the palace, you will soon recover." Kālī Babu said the same. The Mahārājā asked them both to go and request Bābā Mahāśaya on his behalf to kindly come and grace the palace by his presence and the *kīrtana* of the Holy Name.

They went and conveyed his request to Bābā Mahāśaya and insisted on his accompanying them to the palace with his companions immediately. Bābā Mahāśaya complied. The night had already fallen, when he reached the palace with his party singing: '*Bhaja Ntār-Gaura Rādhā-Śyāma, Japa Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Rāma*.' The employees of the palace came out with two torches and escorted them to the room where the Mahārājā was lying. The Mahārājā asked his attendants to help him to go in the midst of the *kīrtana*. His mother objected, but he did not listen. With the help of his two attendants he went and bowed down to the *kīrtana*-party and then stood aside. Bābā Mahāśaya and his party encircled him and began to move round him singing and dancing. The Mahārājā felt inspired and energized by the *kīrtana*. He raised his arms and began to dance himself. Tears constantly flowed from his eyes and his face was radiant. It appeared that he had drunk deep of the nectar of the Divine Name and was in ecstasy. After sometime Bābā Mahāśaya clasped the Mahārājā in his arms and began to dance with him. The rest of his party and the employees of the palace all danced round them, singing and clapping their hands with the beats of *khol* and *karātāla*, while Navadvīpa Dāsa leapt and jumped

shouting aloud 'Jai Nitāi! Jai Nitāi!' The shouts of 'Haribol' also rent the sky from time to time. The whole palace seemed to have gone into ecstasy. When Bābājī Mahāśaya left the Mahārājā, he was in tears and the *sāttvika-bhāvas* appeared all over his body. He said, "I am blest. My illness has proved a blessing in disguise. All that was evil in me is gone for ever." He then asked one of his men to take the *saṁkīrtana*-party in and around each room of the palace. He did the same. When the *saṁkīrtana* was over the Mahārājā rolled on the ground to purify his body with the dust of the feet of the Vaiṣṇavas. He then requested Bābā Mahāśaya to bless him thus by performing *kīrtana* at the palace everyday. Bābā Mahāśaya said, "We shall do as Nitāi Cānd wills." He returned to his *āśrama* at 11:30 p.m. dancing and singing with his companions.

The Mahārājā did not take any medicine thereafter, yet he was fully cured. He sent his men every day to bring Bābā Mahāśaya and his party to the palace for *kīrtana*.

The party continued the *saṁkīrtana* for seven days, but Bābā Mahāśaya accompanied it only for two more days. From that time onwards the employees of the palace did not obstruct anyone from chanting the Name.

A few days later cholera broke out in Purī. Hundreds of lives were lost every day. Bābā Mahāśaya said to his companions, "Look, we are today going to wage a *saṁkīrtana*-war against cholera. You must all gird up your loins as soldiers of the *saṁkīrtana*-army. The army will go round the city performing *saṁkīrtana* under the command of Nitāi Cānd. No one must go out of the

ring of the army during *saṁkīrtana*. If any one goes out Nitāi Cānd will not be responsible for his safety."

The *saṁkīrtana* started from Jhāṇapitā Maṭha and reached Sīṁhadvāra. At Sīṁadvāra Bābājī Mahāśaya sang and danced with unusual vigour in a manner in which he appeared to be the very image of war rather than of love, in which he usually appeared in his *saṁkīrtana*. The shopkeepers round about, the *pandas* and *pujāris* and the passers-by, young and old, men and women all joined his *saṁkīrtana*. The *saṁkīrtana* army swelled more and more in numbers as it marched through the streets with Bābājī Mahāśaya singing:

*"Yama flee, O flee, Nitāi has come,
Gaura has come, Advaita has come
On Gaura's register is registered our name,
No more, no more on us thy claim."*

Others repeated the song and leaped and jumped like frenzied soldiers on march to conquer Yama. They were confident that Yama would at last be conquered.

Slowly the *saṁkīrtana*-party reached Harchandī Sāhi. But God knows how and why Phanī, who never disobeyed Bābā Mahāśaya, got separated from the party and was seen trailing behind, against the order and warning of Bābā Mahāśaya. After sometime he had stomach-ache and hurried into the Auliyā Maṭha to ease himself. He had one motion and his face became black. Then he ran to Jhāṇapitā Maṭha, had one or two motions more and lay completely broken on the bed. Lalitā Dāsi²³ was very much alarmed to see his condition. When

²³ Lalitā Dāsi and Kusuma Dāsi are the names of two male disciples of Barhā Bābā, who had *sakhi-bhāva* and had become *siddha* in that *bhāva*.

Bābā Mahāśaya returned from *nagara-kīrtana*, she said to him, "Phaṇi is laid up with cholera. His condition is serious."

Bābājī No surprise. I had warned that whosoever would go out of the *saṅkīrtana*-party would come to grief

Sometime later Lalitā Dāsī came again greatly disturbed and weeping and said, "Come and see! Phaṇi is dying. His limbs are cramped, body has become icy cold, motions, sweating and vomiting continue. He does not recognize anyone. There is no hope of his survival."

Bābā Mahāśaya wore a long face and said, "What can I do? Go and speak to Bābā." By 'Bābā' he meant his *śikṣā* guru Śrī Gauraharī Dāsa Bābājī, who had come to Purī and was presently staying in Jhānjapitā Maṭha. Lalitā Dāsī went to him, while Bābā Mahāśaya went to see Phaṇi in his room. When Lalitā Dāsī supplicated to Gauraharī Dāsa Bābājī, he said, "What can I do? Go and speak to Yadava (Bābā Mahāśaya)." He then went to see Phaṇi. Lalitā Dāsī followed. She looked at both Bābā Mahāśaya and Gauraharī Dāsa Bābājī and said weeping and wailing, "Look, both of you, father and son, if this boy dies, I shall break the *kañthī* of each of the other boys in the *āśrama* and send them home. I shall go about and preach that neither the Name nor the *mahātmās* have any power. I say, you are the well-wishers and benefactors of mankind. Is this boy not a human being? You are so cruel to him that for a small offense, which he has inadvertently committed, you are going to punish him with death! Now I have said what I had to say, and I shall see."

Bābā Mahāśaya saw that Phaṇi was about to die. He sat near him cross-legged and asked those

performing *kīrtana* to sing louder. His condition worsened. His eyes turned upwards and his body became still and motionless. Suddenly he breathed his last. All began to weep. Bābā Mahāśaya shouted "Ha Nitāi!" His body trembled. He touched Phaṇi's forehead with the great toe of his right leg. His eyes became red and moistened and seemed to be fixed on someone nobody could see. He seemed to say to him something in broken words, but in a manner that was bold and spirited. Immediately Phaṇi's dead body began to move and breathe and his face became bright. Lalitā Dāsī, who was sitting near his feet, turned her eyes towards Bābā Mahāśaya. She was surprised to see that there sat instead of him a tall, white and lustrous *mahāpuruṣa* with *hala*²⁴ and *mūṣala*²⁵. But as she said to the person sitting by her side, "Look, how handsome and lustrous" she saw Bābā Mahāśaya and not the lustrous *mahāpuruṣa*. Phaṇi was revived. Bābā Mahāśaya asked his companions to continue *kīrtana* and left the room.

At four o'clock in the afternoon Bābā Mahāśaya called Rāma Dāsa and said, "Rāma, collect everyone in the *āśrama* and go for *nagara-kīrtana* and return home before sunset." Rāma Dāsa went out for *nagara-kīrtana*. Towards the evening Bābā Mahāśaya went and stood at the gate, waiting for the return of the *kīrtana* party. He asked Lalitā Dāsī and Kusuma Dāsī to stand on either side of the gate with a pitcher full of water. As the sun was about to set the *kīrtana*-party returned. Before the party entered the *āśrama*, Lalitā Dāsī and Kusuma Dāsī poured out water at the gate. The *kīrtana*-party

²⁴ Plough

²⁵ A weapon, which Śrī Balarāma wears.

then began to enter the gate. Bābā Mahāśaya remained standing on one side. Lalitā Dāsī brought one more pitcher of water, which he held in his hand. Soon after he saw a tall, fearful looking person, with long yellow hair standing on end, and copper coloured eyes sinking deep into its sockets, trailing behind at a distance of about five yards from the tail end of the party. Everyone was frightened to see him. Bābā Mahāśaya poured the pitcher of water over his head and said, "Fly, fly!" The fellow began to shout and shriek. Then as Bābā Mahāśaya ran after him with a *lathī* (bamboo stick) in his hand, he took to his heels. Bābā Mahāśaya got the place, where he stood smeared with cow-dung. Then he said, "There is no danger now. Rest assured. That frightful figure was cholera. He is now gone and will not come again."

One day Bābā Mahāśaya was sitting in the *āśrama* surrounded by his companions. He burst out with a start, "Oh! How awful! The whole *dhāma* is going to be in turmoil. All the nine stars (*nava-graha*) are terribly agitated. Lawlessness will prevail everywhere. The service of Jagannātha will be jeopardized. Dissension and discord will destroy the peace of every home."

After three or four days this began to happen. One morning when the inner temple of Jagannātha was opened a bundle containing fish was found lying in front of the altar. No one knew how it happened inspite of the fact that all the doors were locked and sealed as usual. A two-year old calf fell in the well from which water was drawn for the bath of Jagannātha on the *snāna-pūrnimā* day. The calf died. Every day some untoward things happened in the temple and outside.

There was conflict and disturbance everywhere in the city.

Bābā Mahāśaya called Balarāma Dāsa and said, "Something must be done to contain the stars, otherwise things will worsen. We shall have to worship the stars and do *homa*²⁶ and *mantra-japa*. But before we do that we shall have to do *nāma-saṁkīrtana-yajna* for nine days. During the first three days the stars will try to torment and torture and create as much disturbance in the *yajna* as they can. We will have to do the *nāma-yajna* with determination and single-mindedness. *Saṁkīrtana* will be done in a closed space. No one will go out of it and no one from outside will be allowed to come into it. From time to time I shall ask you to do what Nīṭāi wills. You will have to do it blindly without making any protest or inquiring about its purpose or propriety.

Bābā Mahāśaya made everyone living in the *āśrama* drink a glass of purified water, boiled with some herbs and leaves. He drank a glass himself. Then smearing his body with water he began to say to himself, "Māyā has started entering slowly into the *āśrama* in the form of articles unsuitable to the life of non-attachment and *bhajana*. These must be discarded. If they are given away to others they will be detrimental to their *bhajana*. Therefore they must all be consigned to fire."

So, after returning from the Jagannātha Temple that day he asked one of his disciples to bring from his room a costly silken *cāḍara*, which someone had brought for him a few days back. As soon as he brought the *cāḍara* he lighted a match-stick and set it on fire.

²⁶ Fire sacrifice.

When the *cāḍara* was in flames he went dancing happily into his room and brought one by one his cotton *cāḍara* mosquito net, cushion, quilt, pillow and every other thing he had and consigned it to the flames. Everyone watched the bonfire in surprise and dismay but no one had the courage to say anything to him.

Next morning he asked everyone in the *āśrama* to bring his clothes and every other thing he possessed. They began to bring them out. If anyone tried to conceal anything he could not, because the moment he came out Bābā Mahāśaya said angrily naming that particular thing, "You, slave of Māyā, why have you concealed that? Go, and bring it at once!" When everything was brought out and collected at one place, including chair, table, cot and almirah, Bābā Mahāśaya set fire to the collection. Flames blazed up and Bābā Mahāśaya asked everyone to circumambulate the fire with *kirtana*. Many people gathered to see the blaze. But Bābā Mahāśaya was busy all the time going round the *āśrama* to see if anything was left out. If he found anything he brought it and consigned it to the flames. When he was satisfied that everything was consigned to fire, he said to Balarāma Dāsa in a grave tone, "Look Balarāma! Tomorrow *nāma-yaṅna* shall begin. Ask everyone to be ready. Close all the gates of the *āśrama*. During the *yaṅna* no one inside the *āśrama* must go out, and no one outside must come in. Whatever I need during this period you must provide from outside. Just now you give me one hundred rupee coins."

Balarāma Dāsa went to bring the coins. In the mean time there came Balarāma Bhramaravar a Zamindar of Kendrāpārā, who wore a ring studded with nine different kinds of jewel, each corresponding to one of the nine

stars. Since the nine jewels were required for the *yaṅna*, the ring was taken. The coins brought by Balarāma Dāsa were put in nine earthen pots, which were filled with water and kept at a proper place for the *yaṅna*. At night Balarāma brought the *mahāprasāda* of Jagannātha, which everyone took and went to sleep. But Bābā Mahāśaya did not sleep. Throughout the night he was busy cleaning every nook and corner of the *āśrama*. He had already warned everyone against criticizing his action, or obstructing it or asking him why he did it. Therefore no one could say anything.

Early next morning *kirtana* started. The ring with nine jewels, *Śālagrāma-śilā*²⁷ and a number of other things were put in a pot and the pot was kept over the *tulasī-manca* under the *tulasī* plant. The *āśramites* circumambulated the *manca* while performing *kirtana*. While they were doing *kirtana* Bābā Mahāśaya drew water from the well and poured it over them with a *lotā*²⁸. When he had thus bathed each of them, he asked them to throw their *dhoti*, *kaupina* and *bahirvasa* outside the boundary-wall. At first they objected, but when he infused *śakti* in them by giving each one of them a blow with the *lotā*, they readily obeyed and began to sing and dance, as nude as they were born, like children without any self-consciousness.

In the *āśrama* there were two birds, a *śuka* (parrot) and a *sārikā* (a black bird of the parrot species). The *sārikā* used to say to *śuka*, "*śuka parah Bābā parha*,

²⁷ A deity in the form of a sacred stone from the Gandhāri River in the Himalayas.

²⁸ Small metallic container.

din ta jāya—O śuka, chant the Name, for the time is passing." The śuka incessantly repeated, "Bhaja Nitā-Gaura Rādhe Śyāma, Japa Hare Kṛṣṇa-Hare Rāma," "Radhe-Govinda," "kaha sakhi Lalitā Kṛṣṇa tattva-katha—O sakhi Lalitā, talk of Kṛṣṇa," and similar other sentences. Bābā Mahāśaya bathed the two birds, first in the water boiled with barks and leaves, etc., and then with purified water of the well and left them outside the cage. He then began to sing:

"Tell me, O śuka and sārī,
Where is my Rāi Kisorī?²⁹
I cannot live without Rāi
In the blazing fire of separation I die."

As Bābā Mahāśaya sang, both the birds kept looking at his face instead of flying away, as everyone had apprehended they would as soon as they came out of the cage.

When Bābā Mahāśaya stopped singing they began to circumambulate the *tulasī-manca* with the party performing *samkirtana*. After sometime they flew into the temple and sat before the *vigraha* of Śrī Rādhākāntha.

At midday the parrot flew and sat near *Śālagrāma-śilā* in the pot placed over the *tulasī-manca*. The *āśramites* began to sing and dance with renewed vigour and Bābā Mahāśaya began to lovingly caress the parrot with his left hand. Suddenly the parrot left his physical body and entered the Divine *līlā*. Bābā Mahāśaya clung the parrot's body to his chest and began to dance. Grieved by the separation of the parrot everybody began to shed tears, though everyone wondered at its most auspicious end, which even the Rṣis would covet. But Bābā Mahāśaya

was not separating the dead body of the parrot from his chest. After sometime he went to his room and lay down with the body of the parrot on his chest.

It was evening. Bābā Mahāśaya was still inside. The *āśramites* were worried, because the *bhoga* had not yet been offered to the *Thākura*. Balarāma Dāsa was waiting outside for Bābā Mahāśaya's command. Suddenly Bābā shouted, "Balarāma! Bring some *prasāda*, fruits and sweets." Balarāma brought everything. Lalitā Dāśī began to serve. The *āśramites*, all nude and pure in heart like children, started taking *prasāda*. After taking *prasāda* everyone slept. Towards the end of night it began to drizzle. Bābā Mahāśaya came out of his room and began to dance and exclaim, "Oh Lord! Nectar is falling. Come one, come all. Raise your hands and dance and chant. Let the sea of love swell and destroy the thirst and suffering of the world." All came out and began to dance and chant. After sometime Bābā Mahāśaya went and slept in his room with the body of the parrot on his chest as before. Slowly the day dawned. Bābā Mahāśaya was still asleep, but the body of the parrot was not there. Everyone was mystified. When asked as to what had happened to the parrot, he replied, "It has entered the *nitya-līlā* (the eternal Divine *līlā*).

Lalitā: But where has its physical body gone?

Bābāji: The parrot has entered *Vraja-līlā* with his body.

Lalitā: The parrot entered *Vraja-līlā* yesterday, leaving the body here. How could the dead body enter the *līlā*?

Bābāji: Though the parrot left its physical body, it was still here in its subtle body to enjoy the bliss of *samkirtana*. But when nectar rained it again entered the

²⁹ Srimati Rādhārāṇi.

physical body and flew with it to *Nitaya-nikunja*, where it began to chant the Names of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

Everyone was surprised to hear this and to think of Bābā Mahāśaya's mercy upon the parrot

At dawn the next day, the *kīrtana* was resumed. But this day the ordeal was even more difficult for the *āśramites*. Bābā Mahāśaya made them lie down one by one and pressed their body with his feet and poured water over them. He pressed so hard that it appeared they would not survive. But as soon as he left them they felt that he had breathed new life in them and new *śakti* and they began to dance and sing with redoubled energy and enthusiasm. But he did not do this to everyone. Only a few of the young *āśramites* were fortunate enough to be so treated.

At this stage the stars, already on the look out for an opportunity, vibrated their understanding. The seniors among the *āśramites* began to think that Bābā Mahāśaya's total absorption in non-worldly affairs had made him mentally unsound. They forgot all about the warning given by him and began to devise ways and means for deflecting his mind from the *yajna*. At night they asked the *āśramites* to stealthily go out of the *āśrama* one by one. Five or six of them went out. When Bābā Mahāśaya did not see them in the *āśrama*, he went out to search them with a bamboo in his hand, but could not find them.

He saw the lamp-post in the lane shining bright and shouted, "Māyā, Māyā!" He put it off by throwing water over it and began to dance singing:

*"yogamāyā cichakti viśuddha sattva pariṇati,
tāra śakti jive dekhate
śai rūpa retana bhaktageṇera gūrha dhana,*

prakaṣa kaila nitya līlā haite."

The lines speak of the inconceivable power of Yogamāyā, which is the same as Svarūpa-śakti or the Internal Potency of Kṛṣṇa. Yogamāyā is the prime minister, the prime designer and executor of Divine *līlā*. As against Guṇamāyā, the external potency of Kṛṣṇa, which clouds the vision of the *jīva* and causes bondage, Yogamāyā brings about his emancipation and union with Kṛṣṇa. Since Bābā Mahāśaya was at this time engaged in a fight against Māyā (Guṇamāyā) he often repeated these lines, perhaps by way of a challenge to Māyā.

One may wonder why Bābājī Mahāśaya indulged in seemingly erratic behaviour of this kind, and may even be induced to regard it as a sign of madness, if suitable explanation cannot be found. Explanation can perhaps be found. Perhaps he imposed such actions upon his followers as exercises in total, unquestioning surrender, which is necessary for spiritual progress; perhaps he wanted thus to help them rise above body-consciousness and overcome such human weakness as shame (*aya*), fear (*bhaya*) and hatred (*ghnā*) etc., which are obstacles in spiritual development. But whatever the explanation, we cannot escape the conclusion that the actions were extraordinary and indicated an extraordinary state of mind, which may be called madness. But the question is what kind of madness. It cannot be ordinary madness, because Bābā Mahāśaya was much above that level and his very touch or will could cure that kind of ailment, as we have seen it did in the case of Bālmukunda Bābā, the deputy magistrate. It must be divine madness or *divyonmāda*, as the *śāstras* call it. For his actions were not his own. He was only an instrument in the hands of the Lord, to Whom he was completely surrendered.

His actions, therefore, must be beyond the level of our finite understanding. If we judge them we must judge them not by their appearance but by their consequences, which were wholesome, both physically and spiritually, not only for his followers, but for the whole city of Puri, for, as we shall see, he was able to subdue the stars and bring about peace. The divine character of his actions is also borne out by the miraculous nature of the happenings that followed.

On reaching Calcutta, Bābā was made to stay in the garden-house of Kedar Bābū. He was still in the state of *mahābhāva*. On entering the garden he saw that some plants were tied up. He untied them and began to dance in ecstasy.

There was a pond in the garden with a *ghāta*. He got two more *ghātas* constructed. The *ghāta* which was on the side of the garden, he called Rādhākunḍa and those on either side of it were called Lalitākunḍa and Śyāmakunḍa. He imagined these *ghātas* to be Rādhākunḍa, Śyāmakunḍa and Lalitākunḍa of Vṛndāvana and began to behave accordingly in respect of them.

Once an old man, who was an asthma patient came wearing a talisman. Bābā Mahāśaya wanted his talisman to be thrown in Rādhākunḍa. He objected to the talisman being thrown, because, he said, the moment the talisman was removed, asthma aggravated and life became unbearable. Bābā Mahāśaya said, "Do not worry. Your asthma will be cured the moment you dip into Rādhākunḍa." The old man threw the talisman into the pond and dipped into it. Surprisingly his asthma was cured for ever.

One day came Dinabandhu Kavyatīrtha. He was wearing a golden ring, golden chain, a number of talismans

and a wrist watch. As soon as Bābā Mahāśaya saw him, he asked him to throw everything he was wearing, except the clothes, into the pond. For a minute he stood still. Then saying, "The guru's order must be obeyed," he went to the pond and threw everything one by one in the pond and came back. He sat before Bābā Mahāśaya for two hours talking about various subjects relating to *Kṛṣṇa-līlā*. During this period he saw that the rings, chains, watches and talismans of a number of other people were also thrown into the pond. He began to think, "Why should Bābā Mahāśaya do this? Has he really gone mad? Instead of throwing the costly things into the pond he could use them in some way or the other in the service of the poor and the needy. In case he intended thereby to teach detachment, that was a mental process and had nothing to do with the externals." Bābā Mahāśaya came to know this. He smiled and said, "Kāvyatīrtha! You need not be sorry for the loss of all those costly things." Immediately he went and plunged into the pond and in a single dive brought out all the things that had so far been thrown into it. Then handing over to Kāvyatīrtha the things belonging to him he said, "See if these are yours." All those sitting were surprised. They began to say to one another, "How amazing! Things belonging to different people were thrown at different places in the pond at different times and Bābā Mahāśaya brought them all together in a single dive!"

One day Bābā Mahāśaya was talking with a number of visitors, when a woman came weeping and wailing and fell at his feet. He said, "Mā! Why do you weep?"

Woman: Bābā, my only child is suffering from plague. There is no chance of his life. If he dies I cannot live. Kindly save him or I commit suicide at your feet.

Bābājī Mā! Do not lose heart. Go and chant the Name of the Lord and give him the Lord's *caranāmṛta*. The merciful Lord will have mercy on you.

Woman: Bābā! I do not want to listen anything. I cannot do anything. If you do not save him, I shall commit suicide here and now at your feet and leave the world even before my child. The woman said this and began to weep and cry. Bābā Mahāśaya tried his best to soothe her by his sweet words, but could not. Her heart rending cries made everyone weep. At last Bābā Mahāśaya said, "Can you bring the boy here?" "I can" said the woman. She went running and brought him. The boy was about ten years old. Bābā Mahāśaya said to the woman, "Go and give him a dip in Rādhākūṇḍa." The woman obeyed unhesitatingly. After three or four minutes the boy got new life and came out of Rādhākūṇḍa without anyone's help. The woman got her lost child. She took him to Bābā Mahāśaya and made him lie and surrender at his feet. Bābā Mahāśaya embraced him and said to his mother, "Mā, you also go and have a dip in Rādhākūṇḍa and then take the boy home. Nītai Cānd has saved him. Now there is nothing to fear." The devotees sitting near Bābā Mahāśaya began to admire the illiterate woman for her implicit faith which enabled her to save her child and cursed themselves for their lack of faith.

At this time there used to be a crowd of patients of all kinds around Bābā Mahāśaya. He had only one medicine for all kinds of disease. He asked every patient to go and have a dip in Rādhākūṇḍa.

At this time Bābā Mahāśaya's mental condition was like that of a child. Generally he was nude. If anyone gave him some clothes to wear, he wore, but soon gave them away to someone. Sometimes he said, "No,

I shall not bathe." He was always disinclined to eat and could with great difficulty be cajoled into eating a little.

After Bābā Mahāśaya had stayed in the garden for a few days, Jogen Bābū took him to his house in Dariparha. One day Girish Ghōṣa, the famous dramatist, came to Jogen Bābū's house for the *darśana* of Bābā Mahāśaya. He was wearing a number of talismans and was hardly able to speak on account of severe asthma. Bābā Mahāśaya said, "Girish Bābū, throw away all the talismans you are wearing. Nītai Cānd will bless you and your asthma shall be cured." Girish Bābū had great regard for Bābā Mahāśaya, but he could not believe what he said. He took off all the talismans and put them in his pocket. Bābā Mahāśaya saw that he lacked faith. Still he gave him an embrace, which cured his disease forever. Since then Girish Bābū had desired that Bābā Mahāśaya should go to his theatre hall one day and watch the performance. In reciprocation Bābā Mahāśaya said to Jogen Bābū one day, "Jogen, I shall go and see the theatre today." The same evening Girish Bābū came and said, "Bābā, today we shall perform *Caitanya-līlā*. If you kindly come and see it would be fine." Bābā Mahāśaya smiled and said, "let Nītai's will be done."

Bābā Mahāśaya reached the theatre well in time for the performance along with his companions. Seats were already reserved for them in the first row. When they had taken their seats the performance began. That day's performance was different from the performance on other days. With Bābā Mahāśaya sitting in the hall as the veritable dynamo of Bhakti the whole atmosphere in the hall was so charged with the current of Bhakti that the actors forgot their identity and were acting as

if they were themselves the persons, whose parts they were playing, as if it was not a drama that was going on, but the eternal, transcendental *līlā* itself that had come down on the stage. Everything was going well. The audience felt that they were transported into the transcendental Navadvīpa Dhāma itself, where they were watching Śrī Gaurāṅga singing and dancing in ecstasy in the house of Śrīvāsa, and Nityānanda, going singing and dancing from door to door to preach *Harināma* and to convert sinners like Jagāi and Madhāi into saints. But as soon as they saw Madhāi attacking Nityānanda with a brick-bat Bābā Mahāśaya made a loud inarticulate sound and fell senseless on the ground. Dīnabandhu Kāvya-tīrtha tried to hold him, but as soon as he touched him, he was charged with the current of divine love and began to dance in ecstasy. All others, who touched him, were similarly affected, irrespective of the fact whether they were devotees or non-devotees, believers or non-believers.

Giṇsh Bābū had to stop the drama. He was surprised to see all the *sāttvika-bhāvas* appearing on the body of Bābā Mahāśaya. He was also overwhelmed by a new current of devotion, which swept away his pride as a dramatist and made him as humble as a blade of grass. When Bābā Mahāśaya regained consciousness he fell at his feet and said with folded hands, "Bābā, I took pride in the thought that I wrote *Caitanya-līlā* and presented it on the stage. But by your grace I have now realized that *Caitanya-līlā* manifests itself. I have also realized that I have wasted all my life in sinful activities on account of which I will not find place even in hell. But your *kīrtana*-song, which I heard the other day still rings in my ears.

*"What is bygone is bygone, let it be gone,
Now hold on Nityāi's feet for ever and anon.
For there is time yet, let it not fly,
Make hay while the sun shines and the weather
is dry."*

So bless me so that I do not waste my time in trifles and hold on Nityāi's lotus feet to win His grace before I die." Bābā Mahāśaya was happy to hear this. He embraced and blessed him and took his leave.

After sometime Bābā Mahāśaya returned to Purī. Balarāma and other devotees started coming to him. Balarāma said, "All that you had said has come true. As instructed by you I had gone to Konark for worshipping the nine stars. As soon as I returned from there, it was heard that the government had proposed the appointment of an English manager for the temple and the approval of the Mahārājā was awaited. At first everyone got apprehensive but everyone is now satisfied to see the gentle behaviour and religious attitude of the new manager."

Bābājī, I am happy to learn all about the management of the temple and the service of Jagannātha. Now go and bring Jagannātha's *mahāprasāda*. Mahāprabhu has come with me. He has to be offered the *prasāda*.

Prema Dāśā was surprised. He said to Bābā Mahāśaya, "Mahāprabhu is Bhagavān Himself. Nārāyaṇa and other Gods are His partial manifestations. How can you offer to Him the *prasāda* of Jagannātha or any other deity?"

Bābājī, You have asked a good question. I have told you on several occasions that you must not mix *tattva*, or the ultimate reality as it is in itself, with *līlā*. *Tattva* and *līlā* are two different aspects of the same thing. As far as the aspect of Bhagavān as *tattva* is

concerned He is infinite, omnipresent and perfect in all respects. In this form He is neither conceivable nor worshipable His *līlā* is out of question His appearance and disappearance, childhood and adulthood, marriage and *sannyāsa*, dance and *kīrtana* all are meaningless.

But He is by nature *rāsa* (transcendental bliss) and *rasika* (enjoyer of bliss) *Rāsa* is not possible without *līlā*. For the sake of *līlā* He hides within Himself His infinitude, perfection, omnipresence and all other qualities that go with His intrinsic Self as the Ultimate Reality or the All Perfect Being and submits to His own *līlā-śakti*, which makes Him dance as it wills as an ordinary human being. Under the spell of *līlā-śakti*, He allows Himself to be tied by mother Yaśodā, carries the shoes of Nanda over His head and His friends Śrīdāma, Sudāma, etc. upon His shoulders, and dances to the tune of the *gopīs* and enjoys it all. Mahāprabhu is undoubtedly the All Perfect Being, since He is no other than Śrī Kṛṣṇa. But in *līlā* He assumes the role of a devotee. He not only worships Jagannātha and takes His *prasāda* but goes to the extent of taking the dust of the holy feet of the Vaiṣṇavas and in doing so He realizes a higher kind of happiness than He derives from His own Self as the All Perfect Being. Mahāprabhu as *tattva* is different from Mahāprabhu in *līlā*. In *tattva* it is His *aśvarya* (power) that predominates. In *līlā* it is *mādhurya* (sweetness) that predominates. If we mix *aśvarya* with *mādhurya*, the sweetness of *līlā* disappears.

After sometime there was a sweet disturbance in Bābā Mahāśaya's heart and he came to know that four other Thākuras also longed for his service. He called Lakṣmaṇa Mahārānā, a carpenter, and asked him to

make a beautiful and spacious *simhāsana* (altar) for the deities.

Lakṣmaṇa said, "I will make I think a *simhāsana* big enough for Rādhā and Rādhākānta³⁰ will do."

Bābā said, "No, four other deities are expected soon. The *simhāsana* should be big enough to accommodate the guests along with Rādhā and Rādhākānta."

The *simhāsana* was made. After Rādhā and Rādhākānta were seated on it one of the disciples of Śrī Rādhāramaṇa Carana Dāsa Bābājī said, "When will those other Thākuras arrive?"

Bābājī: They will arrive in ten or twelve days.

Disciple: Where will They come from?

Bābājī: Two of Them will come from Haridvāra, two from Calcutta.

Disciple: Are all the four Images of Rādhā-Govinda?

Bābājī: The two Images from Haridvāra are Rādhā-Govinda. They are called Rādhā and Rādhāvinoda. Those from Calcutta are Gaura-Nitāi.³¹

One day Bābā Mahāśaya wrote a letter to Jogen Bābū of Calcutta asking him to send a *hukkā* with a long pipe and the best type of tobacco that was available.

³⁰ Deities of the *śrīrāma*

³¹ Śrī Rādhāramaṇa Carana Dāsa Bābājī could have built separate *simhāsanas* for the guests. Why did he make a spacious *simhāsana* in which They could all be accommodated together? Was it because the guests were so near and dear to Rādhā and Rādhākānta that They wanted Them to stay as close to Them as possible? So it was Rādhā and Rādhāvinoda are but different manifestations of Rādhā and Rādhākānta. Gaura is the combined manifestation of Rādhā and Rādhākānta (Kṛṣṇa—the husband of Rādhā, Nitāi is the combined manifestation of Balarāma and Ananga Mañjarī

Lalitā Dāsī, who was standing behind read the letter. She said, "What will you do with the *hukkā* and the tobacco?"

Bābā replied, "A Thākura is coming from Haradvāra. He will be the guest of our Rādhakāntā and He smokes *hukkā*." The stage was set for the right royal reception of the royal guests.

Soon after a Brahmacārī arrived in the Maṭha with the deities. The deities were bathed and duly installed in the temple and named Śrī Rādhāvinoda. The Brahmacārī told Bābā Mahāśaya the whole story regarding the discovery of Vinoda Bihari and His insistence on being brought to the Maṭha so that They could enjoy his loving service. At the end he said that Vinoda Bihari was accustomed to smoking *hukkā*. As he said this he brought out the *hukkā*, which the Thākura used to smoke and some tobacco. But Vinoda Bihari was served tobacco in the new *hukkā* that was sent from Calcutta. The pipe of the *hukkā* was placed in His hand and the door of the temple was closed. After sometime, when the door was opened, it was found that the temple was filled with smoke and the sweet aroma of the tobacco. This happened day after day and the people came to the temple to see this *līlā* of Rādhāvinoda.

Balarāma is non-different from Kṛṣṇa and Anāṅga Manjarī, the younger sister of Rādhā, from Rādhā. Anāṅga Manjarī is inseparable from Rādhā even at the time of Her most esoteric *līlā* with Kṛṣṇa, in which her service is indispensable (*Anāṅga-Manjarī-samputakā*). Besides Nītā as the *Sevā-vigraha*, the very embodiment of service, is inseparable from Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa (C.Bh., 1.2.5). He is always with Them in the form of Their dress, ornaments, bed, *simhāsana*, and everything else that is directly or indirectly used in Their service, including even the air They breathe (C.c., Ādi.5.9).

After sometime Bābā Mahāśaya twice went to Vraja with a number of his disciples. He stayed mostly in Rādhākunḍa and Kusuma-sarovara surrounded always by the Bābājī's and other devotees, who asked him all kinds of questions relating to *sādhana*. During his conversations with them he often emphasized the role and importance of *kṛpā* or the mercy of Kṛṣṇa.

An old man once asked him, "Bābā, what is the easiest way of attaining Rādhā-Govinda?"

Bābājī: For the *jīvas* of Kālī there is no way except the *kṛpā* of Rādhā-Govinda.

Old man: By what means can we attain *kṛpā*?

Bābājī: The only means for attaining *kṛpā* is *kṛpā*. Kṛṣṇa is eternally dominated and controlled by *kṛpā*. He does whatever *kṛpā* makes Him do. He goes and blesses the *jīva* to whom *kṛpā* takes Him, like a doll pulled by a string, without for a moment judging him by his caste or creed, learning or ignorance, virtue or vice and *bhājana* or anything else. Pūtanā wanted to kill Him by making Him suck her breast smeared with poison, yet *kṛpā* impelled Him to bless her in a manner in which He would bless His foster-mother.

Old man: If *kṛpā* is causeless and indiscriminate it should flow towards the virtuous and the vicious alike. Kṛṣṇa should be as merciful towards all demonic women as he was towards Pūtanā.

Bābājī: True, but one should at least have a longing or *lobha* (greed) for *kṛpā*. A physician wants to give medicine to a patient out of mercy, but if he knows that the patient does not feel any need for it and is likely to throw it away, will he give? Though Pūtanā did not have any longing for Kṛṣṇa-*kṛpā*, she had intensely longed for His death. Longing for Kṛṣṇa even if it be

in an adverse form automatically attracts His *kṛpā*

Old man: I follow that one should have *lobha* or intense longing for *kṛpā* in order to attain *kṛpā*. But how to get the *lobha*?

Bābājī: Man is by nature *lobhī* (greedy). He is unhappy because he has, out of ignorance, made the things of this world the object of his *lobha*. He has only to divert his *lobha* towards Kṛṣṇa and His *kṛpā*.

Old man: But is that not a difficult thing to do? The worldly objects are within our reach. We see them and feel attracted. But we do not feel so attracted by Kṛṣṇa. It is difficult to develop *lobha* for a thing, which does not attract.

Bābājī: Attraction for Kṛṣṇa and His *kṛpā* can be developed if one has the grace of a *mahāpuruṣa*, who has himself been blessed by Kṛṣṇa-*kṛpā*. Company of such persons by itself generates attraction for Kṛṣṇa.

Old man: So, it means that the *kṛpā* of a *mahāpuruṣa*, who has realized Kṛṣṇa, is the chief means for the attainment of Kṛṣṇa-*kṛpā*?

Bābājī: Yes, *Cartanya Caritāmṛta* says that, 'without *mahat-kṛpā* (the *kṛpā* of the great ones) nothing is possible. Kṛṣṇa-*kṛpā* is a far cry, even freedom from bondage is not possible. (Cc. 2.22-32)'

One day Śrīpāda Raghunandana Gosvāmī came from Vrndāvana and said to Bābā Mahāśaya angrily 'I understand that you extol *kṛpā* to the skies and undermine *sādhana* and preach accordingly. I have come to protest against this. *Kṛpā* is not a fruit that falls from the tree. It cannot be obtained without *sādhana*.'

Bābā Mahāśaya made obeisance to him and gave him *āsana* to sit. After Śrīpāda had cooled down a

little, he said with folded hands, 'If you kindly permit, I may say something in this connection.'

Śrīpāda: Yes, I would listen.

Bābājī: I submit that if *kṛpā* can be attained by *sādhana*, it is not *kṛpā*. If it is incumbent on the Lord to give us what we want according to our *sādhana*, how can we call Him *kṛpāmaya* (merciful)? We can call Him *kṛpāmaya* only if he shows mercy upon those, who do not have any succor or support from anywhere and who are so weak that they cannot do any *sādhana* and *bhajana*. We *jīvas* of Kali are so much under the clutches of *Māyā* that it is almost impossible for us to do any *sādhana* without *kṛpā*. Our minds are unsteady. We are always running after the material objects and seeking the fleeting pleasures of life. It is difficult for us to withdraw our mind from them and think of or meditate upon the Lord. I do not undermine *sādhana*. *Sādhana* is necessary, but it is neither possible nor fruitful without *kṛpā*. You say *sādhana* first then *kṛpā*. I say first *kṛpā*, then *sādhana*. *Kṛpā* always precedes *sādhana*. Those who believe in *jñāna*, karma, or yoga may to some extent succeed in attaining something by *sādhana*, but the *upāsāna* of *Vraja-bhāva* is not possible without *kṛpā* because in this kind of *upāsana-ānugātya*, which means guidance of or dependence on the guru and all those who are superior, is necessary and *ānugātya* implies *kṛpā*. *Sādhana* is necessary both for the *sādhaka* and the *siddha*. But in each state *ānugātya* is necessary.

Śrīpāda: Do you mean to say that the example of *sādhana* and *bhajana*, the Six Gosvāmīs and the other associates of Mahāprabhu have set before us, is of no importance whatsoever?

Bābājī: The Gosvāmīs renounced the world and

lived under trees, sometimes under one tree, sometimes under another, sometimes getting food to eat, sometimes going without it, sometimes sleeping and sometimes keeping awake throughout the night and doing *bhajana*. It is difficult for us to follow them. Their *bhajana* is the object of our meditation. They have out of mercy for us, the *jīvas* of Kali, set up an ideal of *sādhana-bhajana* before us so that, if we cannot follow it, we may attain the goal of *Bhakti-sādhana* only by meditating upon it. We should however, follow in their footsteps as much as we can, depending all the time and with all our heart and soul upon their *kṛpā*, without which all our efforts will be futile.

Śrīpāda went back satisfied.

One night Bābājī Mahāśaya was lying under a tree in front of Dāuījī's temple in *Kusuma-sarovara* and Śyāma Dāsa, a Bābājī, whom he loved very much, was massaging his feet. All others were asleep. All of a sudden a light, as radiant and dazzling as a thousand luminaries, emerged from the body of Bābā Mahāśaya. Śyāma Dāsa had to close his eyes. After sometime, when he opened his eyes, he saw some wondrous things, such as he had never seen before emerging out of the light. He was bewildered and lost in speculation about them. At that time Bābā Mahāśaya withdrew his legs from his lap and everything disappeared. He said, "*Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa.*" then called out "*Śyāma!*"

Śyāma: Yes, Bābā.

Bābājī: Tell me what you want.

Śyāma Dāsa was taken aback. He kept looking at Bābā's face, but said nothing. Bābā himself said, "Look, it is easy to find Nītā-Gaura and Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. They are

always near and round you. You cannot recognize Them, because your heart is not pure. In order to recognize Them you need a suitable heart in a suitable spiritual body. All the different kinds of *sādhana-bhajana* prescribed by the *ācāryas* are for the attainment of that body. As soon as that body is attained Kṛṣṇa is also attained."

On being told about *sādhana-bhajana* Śyāma Dāsa pulled a long face. Then Bābā Mahāśaya said, "But don't worry, *bhajana* or no *bhajana*, by Nītā's grace you will attain everything. I have said, you will attain."

On Bābā Mahāśaya's return to Purī, one day Rājaguru Śrī Raghunātha Deo Gosvāmī, who was a great devotee and used to come to Bābā Mahāśaya every day, once said to him, "Look Dādā, I am getting weaker and weaker everyday on account of diabetes. I have to pass urine several times at night." Bābā Mahāśaya said, "Don't worry. We shall go to the bank of Ganges one day. There, water shall mix with water, and you will do *bhajana* happily the rest of your life."

Śrīpāda was happy to hear this and said, "When do we go?"

"Let us go next Monday," replied Bābā Mahāśaya.

Lalitā Dāsī was alarmed. Later, on getting suitable opportunity she asked Bābā Mahāśaya what he meant by saying "water shall mix with water." He replied, "You need not bother about that. You do your *sevā* with single-minded devotion. *Sevā* is the means as well as the end."

Lalitā Dāsī: But I am very much alarmed to hear that. Howsoever much I try, I cannot be at peace.

Bābājī: What do you think I meant?

Lalitā Dāsi: I think you meant that on the bank of the Ganges you would take upon yourself the malady of Śrīpāda

Bābājī: Suppose I do so, will that be wrong? If by forsaking this wretched and good-for-nothing body I can save a good life, will it not be a matter of great good fortune for me?

This caused consternation in the hearts of Lalitā Dāsi and others, who were present there. They began to weep. Then Bābā smiled and said "I do not understand why you should suffer under a false apprehension. Life and death depend upon Nītāi Cānd. He has so far made me live and dance like a doll in His hands. If He wants He will make me dance more, otherwise not. What He does is always for our good. You need not entertain any fear. Do *Harināma* and *sevā*." He tried to soothe them with these words and went to Jagannātha Temple for *darśana*.

The next day Bābā Mahāśaya started for Navadvīpa with Raghunātha Deo Gosvāmī and some others. On reaching Navadvīpa he deputed Govinda and Phaṇī in the service of Raghunātha Deo.

The time had now come for Bābā Mahāśaya to withdraw himself and his *līlā* from the mundane plane. The end had to be in conformity with his life—an act of service and sacrifice for someone he loved. And so it was. He had already hinted this in his conversation with Raghunātha Deo Gosvāmī in Purī.

One day Raghunātha Deo Gosvāmī Prabhu said to him, "Dādā! I am getting weaker day by day. I have to pass urine twenty-five times during day and night. The *āśramites* are very much inconvenienced on account of me."

Bābā Mahāśaya looked at him for sometime, then said, "Have you taken your bath?"

Prabhu: Not yet.

Bābājī: Well, then let us go to the Ganges.

Both of them went to the Ganges. After making obeisance to the sacred river, they went down and stood in water, deep up to the waist. Bābā Mahāśaya suddenly turned grave and said to Gosvāmī Prabhu, "Tell me where you stand at the moment."

Prabhu: I stand in the Ganges in Navadvīpa.

Bābājī: Promise that standing in the Ganges in Navadvīpa you will do as I say.

Prabhu: I promise standing in the Ganges in Navadvīpa that I shall do as you say.

Bābājī: Now take Ganges water in your hand and repeat what I say.

Gosvāmī Prabhu cupped his hands and filling them with Ganges water began to look at Bābā Mahāśaya wondering what he would ask him to say.

Bābājī: Say "Mother Gangā!"

Prabhu: "Mother Gangā!"

Bābājī: "I offer to Rādhāramaṇa Carāṇa Dāsa Bābā all the diseases that plague my body. You stand witness."

Gosvāmī Prabhu was aghast! His whole body trembled. But like one spell-bound he said with tears in his eyes, "I offer to Rādhāramaṇa Carāṇa Dāsa Bābājī all the diseases that plague my body. You stand witness." So saying he poured the water into the hands of Bābā Mahāśaya as he had requested. Bābā Mahāśaya sprinkled the water over his head and embraced Gosvāmī Prabhu. As soon as he did this he began to look pale. He then asked Gosvāmī Prabhu to dip thrice into the river. When Gosvāmī Prabhu came out of the river after the third

dip, his face looked radiant and the body healthy

One day Bābā Mahāśaya went to see a garden in front of Śrīvāsa Angana with Śrī Hari Majūmdār, a resident of Navadvīpa. The garden had a number of fruit trees, flowers of different hues and a drawing room. Bābā Mahāśaya said to Hari Majūmdār, "This is just the type of place where I want to sit.³² I would like to purchase it. Will the owner sell?"

Majūmdār The owner of this garden is Mahitosh Bābū and he has been anxious to sell it.

Bābājī Very good! Then settle everything with him today and now I do not want to leave this place for a moment.

The garden was purchased. Labourers were engaged for repairing, remodelling and giving it a new shape.

But how could Bābā Mahāśaya live in the garden without Rādhā and Rādhākānta (Kṛṣṇa), the twin divinities of his heart, the life of his life and the soul of his soul? His heart began to pine for Them and Their *prema-sevā* (loving service).

Any disturbance in the heart of the devotee invariably produces corresponding disturbance in the heart of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. They also began to long eagerly for his *sevā*. One night They appeared to Bābā Mahāśaya in a dream and said, "Look, We are in distress. You will have to rescue Us."

Bābā Mahāśaya was overwhelmed. He said, "Prabhu! Where are You?"

Kṛṣṇa: We are lying buried under the floor of the temple of Prāṇakṛṣṇa Mullick in Satgachhi.

Bābājī: How will I know in which part of the

temple You are lying buried?

Kṛṣṇa I am lying under the garbage in the North-eastern corner of the temple. Śrī Rādhā and a *Caturbhūja-Nārāyaṇa-mūrti*³³ are lying behind two brass pots under the South-west corner.

Bābā Mahāśaya: If the owners of the temple do not let me enter the temple or do not allow me to bring You, what shall I do?

Kṛṣṇa: Anyone can go and bring Us. The owners will not object, because they are worldly-minded and are not at all interested in Us.

Bābā Mahāśaya was very much distressed to hear about the miserable condition of the deities. He began to weep and could not sleep anymore. Early next morning he sent a man to Satgachhi to call Kunja Dāsa Gosvāmī. When Kunja Dāsa came he explained everything to him and asked him to go and bring the deities. Kunja Dāsa went with Vipinā Bihān Gosvāmī.

Bābā Mahāśaya began to wait impatiently for the arrival of the deities. He went again and again out of the *āśrama* to see if They were coming, but returned disappointed. Once, however, when he went out, he saw Kunja Dāsa Gosvāmī and Vipinā Bihān Gosvāmī coming. He ran towards them and embraced the Śrī Vighrahas of Śrī Rādhā and Śrī Rādhākānta. He was enraptured. *Sāttvika-bhāvas* appeared all over his body. He went dancing to Śrī Gurudeva. Gurudeva was happy to see the deities. He enjoined that They should be duly installed after *abhiśeka*. On the auspicious day of the appearance of Nityānanda Prabhu They were installed in the newly purchased garden, which was now completely

³² Bābā Mahāśaya implied that he wanted to sit there in *samādhi*.

³³ A *murti* of Lord Nārāyaṇa with four arms.

renovated and named 'Rādhāramaṇa Bagh'. A sign-board was put outside the garden bearing the following inscription.

Śrī Vṛndāvana-līlā

Śrī Rādhāramaṇa Bāgh, Anaṅgananda Sukhamaya
Kunja.

Sevā by Anaṅga Manjarī Devī³⁴
of Śrī Lalitā Sakhi group.

Adequate arrangements were made for the *aṣṭakālīna-sevā* of Rādhā and Rādhākāntha.

On the second day of the month of Phālguna, Śukla Pakṣa, Bāṅgābda 1312 (1905 A.C.), Bābājī Mahāśaya joined the *nitya-līlā* in his *manjarī* form to serve Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in the Nitya Anaṅgananda Sukhamaya Kunja, while in the form of Bābā Mahāśaya he sat in *samādhi* in Rādhāramaṇa Bāgh, where he sits still.³⁵

³⁴ It is believed that Śrī Rādhāramaṇa Carāṇa Dāsa Deva in his last moment thus gave an indication of his real self as Nityānanda, since Nityānanda is known to be Anaṅga Manjarī in Nitya. What seems to lend support to the belief that he was an incarnation of Nityānanda is Mahāprabhu's own prophecy that He would have two more incarnations.

henomate āro āche dui avatāra /
kirtāne ānanderūpe haibe āmāra //
(C.Bh., 2.26.11)

If Mahāprabhu can reappear twice, the reappearance of Nityānanda also can be easily believed.

³⁵ His life-size statue of *aṣṭadhātu* (combination of eight metals) in sitting posture is installed over the *samādhi*.

(From page 128)

to This *samkīrtana* song came to Bābājī Mahāśaya in the state of trance. It became his favourite song afterwards, because it contains in a nutshell the fundamental teachings of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu—the End as well as the means. The first line describes the End, and the second the means to achieve it. The End is the realization of Nitya-Gaura, Rādhā-Śyāma and Their loving service. The means through which the End may be realized is the 'Hare Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra. *Bhaja*' means to meditate or adore, *Pābe* means 'will achieve.' *Japa* means repeating the *mantra* and counting the repetitions over the beads of a rosary. Both *bhaja* and *japa* are mandatory. The guru commands the disciple to meditate on Nitya, Gaura, Rādhā and Śyāma (Kṛṣṇa) and simultaneously repeat the *mahāmantra*, because meditation is fruitful only when accompanied by *japa* (Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī's commentary of Bk 11.5).

The order in which the names occur after '*Bhaja*' is significant. '*Bhaja*' evokes the image of guru asking the disciple to meditate on Nitya, Gaura, Rādhā and Śyāma. The invocation of the guru is necessary before the *sādhaka* meditates on Nitya, because Nitya is the *guru-tatva* (the guru-principle) and the *sādhaka's* guru is one of His *prakaśas* or manifestations. The realization of Nityānanda leads to the realization of Gaurāṅga and the realization of Gaurāṅga to the realization of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, as the word '*Pābe*' indicates.

There is however, some misunderstanding in regard to this *kīrtana* inaugurated by Śrī Rādhāramaṇa Carāṇa Dāsa Bābājī, which we shall do well to remove. It is sometimes supposed that it is a substitute for the 'Hare Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra', because some people chant this instead of the *mahāmantra* during *samkīrtana*, that is, in *kīrtana* performed by a number of people together to the accompaniment of *mṛdanga*, *karatāla* and other instruments. That it is not a substitute for the *mahāmantra* is clear from the second line of the *kīrtana* itself, which enjoins that during *japa* one should chant the 'Hare Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra' and from the fact that those who chant these lines during *samkīrtana* repeat only the *mahāmantra* while doing *japa*. They do not chant the *mahāmantra* during *samkīrtana*, because they say that there is no record that Mahāprabhu Himself did it. In the first *samkīrtana* procession, which Mahāprabhu led to the house of Chand Kazi,

there were seven different groups performing *samkirtana*, as shown in *Caitanya-cantāmṛta*, and in each group a different *kirtana* song was sung. No group sang the *mahāmantra*. In His travels in South India also Mahāprabhu is represented as chanting songs like *Rāma Rāghava*, *Rāma Rāghava*, *Rāma Rāghava Rakṣamaṁ* and not the *mahāmantra*. Besides this, in His precepts to the devotees He prescribed the repetition of the *mahāmantra* in *japa* and the singing of other *samkirtana* songs like *Haraye namaḥ Kṛṣṇa Yadhavaya namaḥ Gopāla Govinda Rāma Śrī Madhusudana* during *samkirtana* (C.Bh. 2.23 79-80).

The reason why He did not prescribe the chanting of the *mahāmantra* during *samkirtana* may have been that He regarded the counting during chanting the *mahāmantra* as obligatory. He said that there was no rule regarding the chanting of *mahāmantra*, except that it must be counted (C.Bh. 2.23 77-78). In the *Harī Bhakti Vilāsa* it is stated that *japa* without counting does not bear fruit (HBV 17 60). The counting on beads during the performance of *samkirtana* is impracticable or cumbersome, because during *samkirtana* people usually dance or play on musical instruments while singing.

In the case of Barhā Bābājī Mahāśaya, however, we find in *Caita Śudhā*, his biography in six volumes written in Bengali, that at least on two occasions he asked his disciples to chant *Harē Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra* during *samkirtana* and he himself sat down to count—probably only to show that he was not against the chanting of *mahāmantra* in *samkirtana*, if someone counted the repetitions. He usually chanted *‘Shaya Nitā-Gaura Rādhē-Syāma*, in *samkirtana*, because it did not require counting, also because *Nitā-Gaura* are most merciful. The only purpose of Their appearance is to deliver the weak and fallen souls of this age of Kali and in so doing They do not take into account their offenses (Cc. 1.8 25-28).

Most people, however, chant the *Harē Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra* in *samkirtana* without counting in the absence of an explicit mandate against it. It is true that neither Mahāprabhu nor the *śāstras* have issued a clear injunction against the chanting of *mahāmantra* in *samkirtana* without counting.

CHAPTER X

ŚRĪ NAVADVĪPA CANDRA DĀSA BĀBĀJĪ (Navadvīpa/Purī)

Śrī Navadvīpa Candra Dāsa Bābājī was the foremost disciple of Śrī Rādhāramaṇa Carana Dāsa Deva. Nothing is known about his life before he became a *sādhū*, except that once he went on pilgrimage with his wife and other relatives to Navadvīpa, where he met Śrī Rādhāramaṇa Carana Dāsa, who was then known as Rajen Bābū, and was completely sold out to him. He surrendered himself completely at his feet and renounced the world. Since then he remained with him. Though he accepted him as guru, his relationship with him was not like the relationship between an ordinary guru and ordinary disciple. It was purely a relationship of love as between two brothers. Navadvīpa Dāsa called Rādhāramaṇa Carana Dāsa 'Dādā' (elder brother) and Rādhāramaṇa Carana Dāsa regarded him as his younger brother. The love between them was so deep and intense that it appeared as if they were but one soul in two bodies. Even when they were apart from each other in body, they were not apart in soul. Their thoughts and feelings were identical.

This was testified on a number of occasions. Once when Rādhāramaṇa Carana Dāsa was out in Cuttack and Navadvīpa Dāsa was in the Jhānjapitā Maṭha in

Puri Navadvīpa Dāsa started cooking early in the morning. Lalitā Dāsī¹ who used to cook every day was surprised to see him cooking. He cooked rice and two vegetables—*rasā*² of potato and *baḍi*³ and a mixture of potato, eggplant and *sahajanā*⁴. He offered *bhoga* to Thākura and kept *prasāda* ready at 8 a.m. Lalitā said, "What has happened to you today? Why have you cooked so early and for whom?"

Navadvīpa Dāsa replied, "For whom shall I cook? Dādā must be coming. He must be hungry and will ask for *prasāda* as soon as he arrives."

Lalitā Dāsī said to the other inmates of the *āśrama*, "Look at Navadvīpa Dādā! Barhā Bābā (Rādhārāmaṇa Carāṇa Dāsa) is in Cuttack. There is no information about his arrival here and he has cooked for him."

Just then Barhā Bābā entered the Maṭha, exclaiming 'Jai Nītāi! As soon as Lalitā Dāsī made obeisance to him, he said, "Lalitā! I am very hungry. I did not eat anything yesterday night."

Lalitā said, "The *prasāda* is ready. I shall bring it presently."

"What *prasāda*? I want to eat rice with mixed vegetables made from potato, eggplant and *sahajanā* and *rasā* of potato and *baḍi*."

Lalitā Dāsī said as she spread an *āsana* to sit. "Kindly sit down. I shall give you the very things you want to eat."

¹ Śrī Jaigopāla who had *sakhī-bhāva* and whose name as *sakhī* was Lalitā Dāsī.

² A vegetable with soup.

³ A ball made from split pulse.

⁴ A vegetable.

Bābā sat down. Lalitā Dāsī placed the *thāla*⁵ containing *prasāda* before him. He was surprised to see the *prasāda*. He said, "Oh! Exactly what I wanted to eat! And everything prepared so early!" Then he added, "Oh! I see Navadvīpa is here. Who else could know my mind?"

Once in Jhānjapitā Maṭha Bābā suddenly spoke, "Oh! Today Navadvīpa gave me a sour plum to eat. My teeth have become sour."

Someone said, "Bābā! Navadvīpa is out in Sākṣigopāla. How could he give you a plum?"

Bābā said, "Ask Navadvīpa when he comes."

The next day Navadvīpa came. Everyone said, "Dādā! Did you give Bābā a sour plum yesterday? He was saying that his teeth became sour."

Navadvīpa burst into tears. His companions asked him why he was weeping. He said, "I have committed an offense. Yesterday in Cuttack while I was crossing a field, I saw a big plum lying under a tree. I picked it up and before eating offered it mentally to Dādā as usual. I did not know that he would accept such a trifling thing offered to him from a distance. Oh! How like a fool I offered a sour plum to him."

Navadvīpa knew nothing except the guru and did nothing except service to the guru. He had become *siddha* only by rendering loving service to the guru. He was to the guru an indispensable companion, because through him he did what no one else could. We have seen how it was he, who was chosen by him for the task of inviting all the dogs of Navadvīpa to the

⁵ A big metallic plate.

grand feast organized on the occasion of the deliverance (death) of 'Bhakti Mā,' a devotee in the form of a bitch and how the dogs responded to his invitation and behaved like men.⁶

The task, that was dearest to Rādhārāmaṇa Carāṇa Dāsa Deva was the deliverance of the fallen souls. No one could help him better in this than Navadvīpa, because he had drunk deep of the milk of human kindness and his heart melted easily to see the suffering of the *jīvas*.

Once, while in Cuttack, he saw in front of the office of the municipal board a bullock-cart loaded with filth, to which was harnessed a bullock, with wound on its neck. Navadvīpa's heart melted to see the wounded bullock in harness. He went to the cart and asked the driver to get down. The driver like one spellbound, came down. Navadvīpa asked him to release the bullock and harness him to the cart. The driver was stupefied. He refused to comply. Navadvīpa kept on insisting. A crowd gathered on the spot. Navadvīpa was not a stranger to the people of Cuttack. The officers of the municipal board also knew him. They came out and apologized to him, got the bullock released and another harnessed in its place.

As the most essential part of his service to the guru Navadvīpa went about in search of the most sinful and degraded people, whom he could surrender at the feet of his beneficent and all merciful Dādā for their deliverance. An interesting case in this connection is that of Ananda Mitra. He was the richest advocate of Cuttack, but there was no sin, howsoever heinous, which he had not committed. He was a skeptic and a rank materialist.

⁶ See the chapter on Sri Rādhārāmaṇa Carāṇa Dāsa Deva.

One day Navadvīpa Dādā went to his house, singing, 'Bhaja Nitāi-Gaura, Rādhā Śyāma, Japa Hare Kṛṣṇa-Hare Rāma,' and beating cymbals as he sang. The gate-keeper, who knew his master's mind, asked him to go away. But he did not listen. Then Ānanda Bābū came out and asked, "What do you want?" Navadvīpa did not reply, but continued to sing, since his real purpose was to make him hear *Harināma*. Ānanda Bābū said angrily, "You maniac! Why don't you listen? What do you want?"

"Nothing" replied Navadvīpa smilingly.

"Then what have you come for?"

"I do not know."

"Then who knows?"

"The Lord knows."

In utter dejection Ānanda Bābū went in, asking the servant to give the beggar four *pice*⁷ and dismiss him. The servant began to give him the money, but he did not heed and continued to sing. Ānanda Bābū shouted from his drawing room, asking the servant why he did not give the money and dismiss him. The servant went and told him, "Sir, he neither accepts the money nor leaves. He seems to be concerned only with *kīrtana*." Ānanda Bābū was infuriated. He said, "Oh! the rogue will not leave like this. Wait, I am coming." Immediately the servant came out running and said to Navadvīpa Dāsa, "Run away Bābū is coming. He will beat you." Navadvīpa laughed and began to sing more loudly. Ānanda Bābū came and said, "You swine of a man! Why don't you say what you want?"

Navadvīpa did not reply. He only looked at him.

⁷ One rupee was equal to 64 pice.

smilingly Ānanda Bābū was convinced that he was mad. He said in softer tone, "Take the money and go. Or let me know what you want."

Navadvīpa only wanted that he should listen to his *kīrtana*. So he continued

"Bhaja Nitāi-Gaura, Rādhē-Śyāma,

Japa Hare Kṛṣṇa-Hare Rāma."

But why should Ānanda Bābū listen. He asked the servant angrily to go and bring his whip. The servant brought the whip. Ānanda Bābū stood staring at Navadvīpa Dāsa with the whip in his hand. Navadvīpa stood smiling and singing with greater enthusiasm. His eyes beamed with love and face was radiant with transcendent joy. Ānanda Bābū was surprised. He began to think that the fellow was neither mad, nor an ordinary beggar. There was a change in his attitude. He said in a soft persuasive tone, "Please, why not tell me what you want?"

Navadvīpa then said with a smile, "I want something to eat."

"What will you eat?"

"*Lāi* (parched rice)."

Ānanda Bābū threw four pice before him and said, "Take this money and eat *lāi*."

"What shall I do with this?" said Navadvīpa.

Ānanda Bābū did not understand what he meant. He threw a four *anna bit*⁸ near him and said, "Purchase *lāi* with this and eat."

Navadvīpa did not even look at the silver coin. He laughed and came away. Ānanda Bābū kept wondering and looking at him till he was out of sight. He went to the court as usual, but the mystic figure of Navadvīpa

Dāsa continued to persevere in his mind.

Two days later at about 8 o'clock in the morning Navadvīpa Dāsa again went to the house of Ānanda Bābū singing *'Bhaja Nitāi-Gaura, Rādhē-Śyāma, Japa Hare Kṛṣṇa-Hare Rāma'*. He was busy examining some papers in his office. As soon as he heard Navadvīpa Dāsa singing he said to a servant, "Call that maniac." The servant obeyed. Navadvīpa Dāsa went in and stood before Ānanda Bābū. Ānanda Bābū asked him with a smile to sit down on the chair. Navadvīpa sat down. Ānanda Bābū asked, "What is your name?"

Navadvīpa: People call me Navadvīpa Dāsa.

Ānanda: Where do you live?

Navadvīpa: I am a beggar. I do not have a fixed place to live. I live wherever I find shelter.

Ānanda: Where and what do you eat?

Navadvīpa: I eat wherever I get something to eat.

Ānanda Bābū threw a rupee coin before him and said, "Take this. You wanted to eat *lāi*. You can eat."

Navadvīpa Dāsa got up and began to leave, saying, "I want *lāi* and you give me rupee. What shall I do with the rupee?"

Ānanda Bābū said entreatingly, "Well, well, I will get *lāi* for you. Please sit down."

"I will come some other time" said Navadvīpa Dāsa and left, singing *Bhaja Nitāi-Gaura, Rādhē-Śyāma*. The rupee lay untouched where it was.

Ānanda Bābū began to think, "I wonder—what kind of man he is. He is a beggar, but he does not accept money. I thought he was mad, but from his conversation it appears that there is nothing wrong with him. He appears to be a Vaiṣṇava, but he is very much

⁸ One quarter of a rupee.

unlike the ordinary Vaiṣṇavas. I do not know why he comes to me. He says, 'Give me something to eat' but he does not want to eat anything except *lāi*. Twice he came and went without eating."

Three or four days went by. One evening Ānanda Bābū was sitting in the verandah outside his house on an easy-chair and smoking *hukkā*, when Navadvīpa Dāsa came singing '*Bhaje Nitāi-Gaura, Rādhē-Śyāma, Japa Hare Kṛṣṇa-Hare Rāma*'. Ānanda Bābū was happy. He said, "Come, come, I have been just thinking of you." He asked the servant to bring another chair. Navadvīpa sat down on the chair. Ānanda Bābū said, "Gosain,⁹ tell me what you have in mind today."

Navadvīpa: I have come to eat *lāi* as I promised that day.

Ānanda: Why *lāi*? Why not eat something else?

Navadvīpa: No, no. If you can give *lāi*, I shall eat, otherwise I go.

Ānanda: Very well, I shall give you *lāi*.

Ānanda Bābū asked the servant to go and bring *lāi*. Then he said, "Gosain, I wonder why you come to me. Obviously you do not come for *lāi*. Tell me why you come."

Navadvīpa: Why do you go to the court?

Ānanda Bābū felt somewhat offended. A small fry he, asking a reputed lawyer a silly question, he felt. In the same strain he said, "Do you come to me for the same purpose, for which I go to the court?"

Navadvīpa: You are an educated person. Your science says that everything is bound by the same Law of Uniformity. If that is true, is it not possible that I

⁹ Holy person.

come to you for the same purpose for which you go to the court?

Ānanda: I could not follow.

Navadvīpa: Perhaps you do not believe in God. But you believe in science and the laws of science. According to science the law, according to which the sun, the moon and the stars, moving along their course, remain fixed in their position, is the same as the law according to which the leaves of the trees fall on the ground. This is called the Law of Gravitation. Isn't that so?

Ānanda: Yes.

Navadvīpa: Now suppose you are like the sun or the moon, because you are a big lawyer. You earn so much money and you have so many servants, who are always at your beck and call. I am the leaf of a tree, a beggar, who goes a-begging for his food. You are so great, I am so small. Is it not possible that both of us are going about our respective business in the world for the same purpose?

Ānanda: Babu's face reddened. He said curtly, "I go to the court for money. Do you also come to me for the same purpose?"

Navadvīpa: You are mistaken. You do not go to the court for money. Money is only a means to the end. What do you want money for?

Ānanda: I want money to spend on things that will make me and my family happy.

Navadvīpa: So happiness is the end. You go to the court for the sake of happiness. I also come to you for the sake of happiness. It makes me happy to come and sing *Harināma* to you and to tell you, if you want to listen to me, that the happiness I enjoy

or aim at is qualitatively far superior to the happiness enjoyed by you.

Ānanda Bābū frowned. He thought how could a beggar, who had to depend for his meals upon others, be happier than a person, who had plenty to feed himself and others and to enjoy all the different kinds of pleasure the world had to offer. He could not, however, dismiss the idea as the figment of the imagination of a lunatic, because he was by now convinced that Navadvīpa Dāsa was neither a lunatic, nor an ignorant or illiterate person, who simply indulged in tall talk, but a wise man, to whom one must listen before disbelieving. He said, "Gosain, I must take what you have said with a grain of salt. You have to substantiate it."

Navadvīpa: You see, the happiness you are after is mixed with pain and transient. The happiness, we *sādhus* aim at is unmixd with pain. It is everlasting and ever growing. What you call happiness is sensuous pleasure, not happiness. It makes you the slave of the senses. It makes you sink lower and lower in the scale of existence, till you find yourself in hell. What we regard as happiness pertains to the soul, not to the body or the senses. It is a sign of liberation rather than of bondage. It is the natural concomitant of a pious life dedicated in entirety to the service of the Lord, the fountain-head of all happiness.

This led to a number of questions regarding the existence of God, the nature of the soul, life after death, the law of karma and heaven and hell. A long discussion spread over a number of sittings that followed. Slowly Ānanda Bābū was weaned out of his materialistic leanings. It dawned upon him that man had a higher destiny than the sensuous and sinful life he had been leading, that

there was a God to whom he was responsible for his actions, and that his consignment to the worst kind of hell for all the sins he had committed was certain, if he did not make proper amends. He had possibly heard of God, heaven and hell even before, but never was he so convinced about them as now. It was obviously due to the spiritually most powerful company of Navadvīpa Dāsa, who went about seeking the fallen souls and forcibly pulling them out of the mire of *Māyā*.

So in a deeply penitent mood he fell at his feet, with tears profusely streaming out of his eyes and said, "Dādā! You have come to me as my saviour. You have aroused me from my slumber. I have been running fast towards the well of destruction. You have opened my eyes. Now you must tell me what I should do. I surrender myself at your feet." Navadvīpa Dāsa asked him to have patience till he surrendered at the feet of his own Dādā. Śrī Rādhāramaṇa Carana Dāsa Deva.

One day Navadvīpa Dāsa took Barhā Bābā Mahāśaya to Cuttack. Ānanda Bābū, who had come to receive him at the station took him to his house in a carriage. While still in the carriage, he fell at his feet and began to wash them with the tears of his eyes and say, "Bābā! I cannot say how many sins I have committed. I have been a meat-eater, a drunkard and a debauch. I have spoiled the chastity of so many women and cheated so many people. I have worked against my own client by accepting money from the opponent. I had not believed till now that there was someone above me, who would sit in judgement upon me and I shall be punished for all my deeds. Navadvīpa Dāsa has opened my eyes. I have begun to hate myself just as everyone else hates me. Even Nityā-Gaura will close Their eyes to see me.

My only hope lies in your lotus feet. Kindly have mercy on me."

Ānanda Bābū was thus weeping and wailing. Bābā Mahāśaya was reclining on the back of his seat, while his feet were held by Ānanda Bābū close to his heart. He was listening to the penitential outpourings of his heart with eyes half closed. At intervals his body trembled and he shouted *Jai Nitāi! Jai Nitāi!* When Ānanda Bābū completely broke down he said, "Ānanda Bābū, you need not be so restless. In this age of Kālī no one shall be debarred from the mercy of the Lord. For Nitāi-Gaura shower Their mercy on all, without taking into account their faults. You give me all the sins you have committed in this life and the lives that have passed and take shelter under Their feet with a pure heart." So saying he locked Ānanda Bābū in his arms and sat still. His entire body became so dark and lustreless that it was difficult to recognize him.

After a short while the carriage stopped in front of Ānanda Babu's house. Bābā Mahāśaya got down. Navadvīpa Dāsa saw his darkened body. He understood what had happened. He shouted *He Nitāi! Jai Nitāi!* and began to dance in ecstasy. Bābā Mahāśaya caught his right hand with his left hand and both began to dance together. Others came with *khol* and *kartālas* and began to do *kirtana*. Adroit Navadvīpa Dāsa, dancing with Bābā Mahāśaya, ingeniously took him inside the house along with the *kirtana*.

Neighbours heard the sound of *kirtana* and came running to Ānanda Babu's house. They saw Ānanda Bābū dancing in the midst of *kirtana* with both of his arms raised and tears incessantly flowing from his eyes. "What a surprise!" they said, "Ānanda Bābū was a terror to

the *sādhus* and Vaiṣṇavas. They dared not go near his house. Today not only the *Vaiṣṇava-sādhus* are doing *kirtana* in his house, he is himself dancing in their midst like a devout Vaiṣṇava! Someone said "That *sādhū*, who is looking like a lunatic, I saw him, coming to Ānanda Babu's house a number of times. Possibly the change in Ānanda Bābū is due to his company." Some said "Look at that tall *mahāpuruṣa* with arms reaching up to the knees, dancing in ecstasy and Ānanda Bābū praying and weeping and rolling at his feet. It must be due to his mercy that he is suddenly changed from a sinner to a saint."

The next day Bābā Mahāśaya gave him *mantra* amidst *kirtana*. The fire of penitence had already burnt the shrubby growth of unhealthy *samskāras* in his heart and penitential tears had washed it clean. Therefore, the seed of the *mantra* sprouted at once. The *aṣṭa-sāttvika-bhāvas* appeared on his body. He stood up and began to dance in *kirtana*. As he danced trembling of the body and hornpilation were so severe that they could not be controlled. He fell senseless on the ground. Even in the unconscious state tears constantly streamed out of his eyes and his body trembled like the leaves of a tree in storm. After sometime Bābā Mahāśaya held both of his hands and began to dance. Ānanda Bābū danced with him like one under the charm of a spell. Navadvīpa Dāsa also began to dance in ecstasy and shout *Jai Nitāi!* Everyone was surprised to see this and was reminded of the deliverance of Jagā-Madhāi by Mahāprabhu.

Once Navadvīpa Dāsa was traveling on foot from Calcutta to Pūrī. On the way he came across a prostitute. Perhaps his spiritual eye spotted some *samskāras* of Bhakti

lying hidden in her heart and struggling to come out. His heart melted to see her. He begged for some *lāi* from her. She gave, but as she looked at him while giving, she was so hypnotized as it were, that along with the *lāi* she also gave herself up to him, and could not but follow him. On reaching Jhānjapitā Maṭha Navadvīpa prostrated himself before Barhā Bābā. The prostitute also made obeisance to him. He asked Navadvīpa, "Who is she? Why have you brought her?" Navadvīpa said, "She has come to beg for your mercy, kindly bless her."

How could Barhā Bābā refuse to bless her, when Navadvīpa recommended her? He blessed her with *mantra-dīkṣā*. She began to live in Purī and do *bhajana*. There was unprecedented change in her. She became a great devotee.

We have said that Navadvīpa Dāsa was to Barhā Bābā Mahāśaya like his second self. He was so dear and so indispensable to him that once, when his span of life was over according to his horoscope and he actually died, he had to bring him back to life. Will it not sound strange and stupefying beyond limit, if we are told that at the end the two parted company Barhā Bābā Mahāśaya forsook him for no fault of his except that his faith in the guru was so deep and intense that he not only regarded him as non-different from God in principle, as the *śāstras* say, but realized him as such and wanted his thought, speech and action to be in conformity with his realization. The episode is too touching and mystifying. We shall do well to describe it by quoting as follows from *The Life of Love* ¹⁰ where it is described in detail:

¹⁰ The biography of Śrī Rādhārāmaṇa Carāṇa Dāsa Deva in English version.

"For the last seven or eight days Navadvīpa Dāsa has been staying away from Bābā Mahāśaya. He stays in the house of Kunja Bābū, at a long distance from Darjiparha, where Bābājī Mahāśaya is staying. He comes to Darjiparha occasionally and meets his God-brothers, but goes back without meeting Bābā Mahāśaya. Bābā Mahāśaya also does not make any inquiry about him. Bābā Mahāśaya's other disciples are both surprised and aggrieved to see this. They have the same place in their heart for Navadvīpa Dāsa as they have for Bābā Mahāśaya, perhaps even more. They may for once ignore the advice of Bābā Mahāśaya, but never that of their Navadvīpa Dādā. There cannot be a greater cause for their distress than the absence of Navadvīpa Dādā from their midst. Therefore when Navadvīpa Dādā comes, they surround him and say painfully, "Dādā! Have you abandoned us?" Navadvīpa Dāsa replies, "I have not abandoned you. I cannot abandon you. But your Gurudeva has abandoned me for this life."

The cause of the conflict between the guru and the disciple was their disagreement regarding the guru-principle (*Guru-tattva*). Navadvīpa Dāsa held that the guru was the highest *tattva*; he was the combined manifestation of Śrī Gaurāṅga and Śrī Nityānanda. For him the service of the guru meant the service of all; the chanting of the name of the guru meant the chanting of all other names. Bābā Mahāśaya held that *Guru-tattva* was undoubtedly one with *Bhagavata-tattva* but in practice it was necessary to distinguish one from the other. In case of every other thing too, we must distinguish between the object as perceived and its *tattva*, that is, the object as it was in itself. If we did not do so that would end in libertarianism and utter disregard of

the *sāstra* The *Guru-tattva* was the most difficult *tattva* to understand. One could worship and relish the *Guru-tattva* according to his own *bhāva*, but one must not preach it to others. It was easier to carry on *sādhana* if guru was regarded as a helpful guide rather than as Bhagavān.

Navadvīpa Dāsa said that if guru was regarded as only a means to attainment of the End and worshipped only till the end was achieved, that was not *Guru-Bhakti* in the proper sense. In reply to this Bābā Mahāśaya said that since he never denied that *Guru-tattva* and *Bhagavata-tattva* were non-different, he could not blame those who worshipped the guru as such, but he insisted that the kind of worship one adopted must be according to one's *adhikara* or capability. If in all sincerity one felt in the presence of the guru that he was in the presence of Bhagavān Himself, he could worship him as such. But he should not preach that others also should do the same, because in this age of Kali people generally lacked the faith.

In short, Navadvīpa Dāsa wanted to act and preach freely according to his belief and realization that Bābā Mahāśaya was the combined incarnation of Gaura and Nityā, just as Mahāprabhu was the combined incarnation of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā and Nityā was the combined incarnation of Balarāma and Ananga Manjari. But Bābā Mahāśaya was vehemently against this.

This difference between them had been going on for quite sometime. This is obvious from the fact that once, while Bābā Mahāśaya was in the garden of Prasanna Bābū, he started weeping like a child. When his companions asked him why he wept, he replied, "The wilfulness on account of which I renounced

Surendra, Bhavendra and Devendra has started taking root again. When I remember them my heart breaks. Each one of them was the reservoir of infinite *śakti*. My present companions stand nowhere in comparison to them."

Bābā Mahāśaya often talked of Surendra, Bhavendra and Devendra, whom he had renounced for the kind of wilfulness, now exhibited by Navadvīpa Dāsa. Bābā Mahāśaya's companions sometimes requested him and sometimes Navadvīpa Dāsa to make up their differences and behave towards each other as before. Bābā Mahāśaya replied, "What can I do? Navadvīpa, who always sought satisfaction in my happiness has now begun to seek his own happiness. He would be happy, if he is allowed to present me before the world as an incarnation. Is he still the same old Navadvīpa?"

Navadvīpa Dāsa replied, "What can I do? Bābā Mahāśaya, whom I called Dādā (elder brother), who was kind and benevolent, loving and lovable like Dādā, and who was always merry like a child, has now become so grim and grave and formal in his behaviour towards me. Is he still the same old Dādā?"

One day Nityasvarūpa, Rāma Dāsa, Lalitā Sakhi, Pulin Bābū and some others decided to make a special request to Bābājī Mahāśaya to resolve the conflict. They wanted to make Rāma Dāsa their mouth-piece. Rāma Dāsa said, "If you want me to speak to him, I can speak only through a song." All of them welcomed this idea. At about seven o'clock in the evening they went to Bābā Mahāśaya's room and closed the door from inside they sat down near Bābā Mahāśaya after making obeisance. All was quiet for sometime. Then Rāma Dāsa began to sing thus in a grievous and

painful tone:

*"Is Navā¹¹ now no one to you Carana¹²
 Erstwhile your heart your soul dear?
 Why now so cold, so hard on him?
 He lives there afar and you live here?
 We weep and weep to see you thus
 So grim and grave all the while,
 O when, O when shall we see you again
 On your, your own dear Navā smile?"*

Rāma Dāsa's throat was choked with emotion as he sang. Tears streamed out of his eyes. All others also sobbed and wept. Rāma Dāsa fell at Bābā's feet and bathed them with his tears. Bābā Mahāśaya was moved. Tears trickled down his eyes. With choked throat he said, "Well, what should I do?"

Pulin: If you agree I can call Navadvīpa Dāsa.

Bābāji: Where is he?

Pulin: He is at my house.

Bābāji: But that is far away.

Pulin: I shall hire a conveyance and bring him here at once.

Bābāji: Do as you please.

Pulin and Nityasvarūpa went to bring Navadvīpa Dāsa. Navadvīpa Dāsa resisted. On their insistence, however, he said, "Well, I go. But the result will be contrary."

Rāma Dāsa and others were rejoicing on the thought that after so many days the twin souls shall meet and their hearts will dance with joy, when Navadvīpa Dāsa arrived, accompanied by Pulin, Nityasvarūpa and

Kunja Dāsa. As soon as Navadvīpa Dāsa entered the room he bowed down to Bābā Mahāśaya. Bābā Mahāśaya bowed down in return. Both were silent for sometime. Others looked now at Bābā Mahāśaya, now at Navadvīpa Dāsa. No one had the courage to say anything. After sometime Bābā Mahāśaya broke the silence by saying to Navadvīpa, "Do you have to say something?"

Navadvīpa: Not to you in your present state, when a different Bābāji Mahāśaya has taken possession of you. I have nothing to do with yourself in this *bhāva*. I am completely and for ever sold out to you in your state as my loving and smiling Dādā. I shall say whatever I have to say when he again appears in you.

Bābāji: I do not know anything about my present state. I only want to know whether you have anything to say to me now.

Navadvīpa: I have nothing to say to you just now. But kindly bless that my devotion to you as my erstwhile Dādā, at whose feet I have surrendered myself for ever and ever, remains firm as ever.

Then Bābā Mahāśaya looked at Rāma Dāsa, Pulin, Nityasvarūpa and others and said, "Now tell me what I should do?" They were all in a quandary. They looked at one another, but could not say anything. After sometime Bābā Mahāśaya said to Navadvīpa Dāsa, "Now what can I say, except that if you do not have anything to do with my present self, you will not see it again. You can go and live where you like and do what you please."

Navadvīpa Dāsa said, "Your command shall be obeyed," and he went down from the first floor to the ground floor after respectfully making obeisance to him. Many others also went down and sat round him. There was no change on the face of Navadvīpa Dāsa. He was

¹¹ Navadvīpa Dāsa

¹² Rādhārāmanya Carana Dāsa Deva

talking with everyone in his usual delightful manner. A little later when Bābā Mahāśaya was coming down, he heard the sound of his footsteps. Immediately he stood up and said, "Bābā Mahāśaya has said that in this life I will not see him again. If he sees me now his words would be falsified. Therefore, I leave." And he left.

Navadvīpa Dāsa, who was like the second half of Bābājī Mahāśaya, who sacrificed the happiness of all the three worlds to please him, who loved him more than he loved Gaura-Nitāi and Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and who could not live even for a moment without him, was not disturbed in the least to hear the hardest command of Bābā Mahāśaya that sounded to him like a clap of thunder, and left the place at once so that his words might not prove false.

Navadvīpa Dāsa went to Vṛndāvana. After a couple of months he fell ill. In his illness he always chanted, 'Dādā! Dādā!' Sometimes he said to people, who attended upon him, "Dādā is coming to see me in this hot season. Prepare *śarabata*¹³ for him." This was not mere imagination. Bābā Mahāśaya came and he gave him *śarabata* to drink. Sometimes he also made the attendants actually see Bābā Mahāśaya. On the Amāvāsya day, two days before Rathā-Yātrā, he said to his attendants, "Take me to Bhramara Ghāta. I will see Yamunā." They took him to Bhramara Ghāta. He made obeisance to Yamunā and prayed to her. Then he started chanting the Name and chanting left the body.

A very old Brahmin lady with matted hair, who was generally regarded as a *yoginī*¹⁴ of a very high

¹³ A cold drink

¹⁴ A female yogi

order and often used to come to Bābājī Mahāśaya, during his stay in Darjeepara, once said to him "Bābā! Have you forsaken Navadvīpa? He is no ordinary person. He is a great soul and his devotion to guru is unique and unheard of." Bābā Mahāśaya replied, "No, no! Can I ever forsake Navadvīpa? He is my heart and soul. His heart breaks to see the miserable condition of the fallen souls. No one is so much concerned about their deliverance as he. But he did something, which I did not like. Therefore, I have only externally forsaken him. My heart always weeps for him."

The yoginī once said to Āmrta Bābā, one of the disciples of Bābā Mahāśaya, "Navadvīpa is great. He is an ideal disciple. If anyone wants to know what *Guru-tattva* and *Guru-Bhakti* is, he should learn it from him. And this Carāṇa Dāsa, do you know who he is? He is *Jal-Cartanya* (imitation-Cartanya). I have seen all the signs of *mahābhāva* appear on his body in *saṁkīrtana*. Once I went to Jhānapiṭh Matha in Puri. All of a sudden he came with a little *mahāprasāda* and wanted to push it into my mouth. I wanted to test him. So I said, 'I will not take this *prasāda*. I will take it if it is the same *prasāda* of which only a small particle had made Śiva and Durgā dance in spiritual madness.' He said, 'Mā! it is the same *mahāprasāda*. You have only to taste it and you will know.' And he put the *mahāprasāda* into my mouth. The moment I took it I was so maddened with love that I cannot describe. Even today my hairs stand on end, when I remember that state. I have travelled far and wide and seen and tested many *sādhus*, Rṣis and yogis living in caves of the Himalayas and the forests, but I have never come across one like him. You are fortunate to have found a guru like him. He and Navadvīpa,

the two great souls are the two biggest luminaries on the spiritual horizon of modern India."

It would be futile to comment upon the activities of the two souls, who lived on a plane much higher than our understanding. But at the same time our mind must, by its very nature, reflect. As far as our understanding goes the parting between Bābā Mahāśaya and Navadvīpa Dāsa was not really a parting of souls. They were, as if, two only in body, one in soul. The parting, therefore, was of two bodies, not of soul. This is apparent from their attitude towards each other after the parting. The parting, however, such as it was, was not without a purpose. The purpose was, perhaps, to establish an ideal—the ideal of a guru, who in his own self was the very epitome of the highest truth, yet who was as humble as a blade of grass, a servant of the servants of the Lord, as Bābā Mahāśaya used to say about himself. Perhaps Bābā Mahāśaya thought it necessary to counter the tendency among some gurus to set themselves up or to allow their disciples to set them up as God. If this tendency continued, he thought, it was bound to create chaos. There would be as many gods as there were gurus. The gods might even fight among themselves, each trying to establish his claim over others for the most exalted position of the Supreme God, and the seekers of God would be lost in the maze.

The great ones, who come to uphold the ideals of true religion often sacrifice their own interest and the interest of those nearest and dearest to them for the sake of an ideal. If Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu abandoned one of His dearest followers, Chotā Haridāsa, to uphold the ideal of a chaste *vairāgi*, it was no surprise that Bābā Mahāśaya abandoned his dearest disciple Navadvīpa

Dāsa to establish the ideal of a guru. In both cases the punishment given was only external and for the good of mankind in general. Chotā Haridāsa remained Mahāprabhu's dear singer and used to sing songs to Him in his spiritual body, after he left his physical body. Similarly Navadvīpa Dāsa remained dear to Bābā Mahāśaya as ever.

CHAPTER XI

ŚRĪ GOVINDA DĀSA BĀBĀJĪ

(Purī/Navadvīpa)

Govinda Dāsa Bābājī's earlier name was Gauracaraṇa Cakravartī. He was born in a village near Dālāla Bājāra in district Nayākhālī. His parents died at an early age. There was no one to support him. But the people of Dālāla Bājāra were impressed by his natural qualities of head and heart. They began to look after him and bring him up as a good Vaiṣṇava.

After sometime he set out for pilgrimage on foot. On the way he ate whatever he got in *bhikṣā* or fasted and slept under the trees. He went to Purī and from there to the extreme South. While in the South he was inspired by some invisible power to return to Purī. When he reached Purī, he had the good fortune of seeing Rādhāramaṇa Carāṇa Dāsa Deva performing *kīrtana* with his party near Sīṃhadvāra. He felt attracted towards him as he never felt attracted towards anyone before. He fell at his feet and surrendered himself to him completely. Rādhāramaṇa Bābā accepted him as his disciple and gave him *mantra*. Both were tied by bond of love forever.

Gauracaraṇa could not live without Rādhāramaṇa even for a second. He served him day and night with his body, mind and soul. By constant service he so identified himself with him that he could read his mind and know what kind of service he would need and

when and started preparing himself and making necessary arrangements for the same even before he asked him to do so.

Once Rādhāramaṇa Bābā Mahāśaya asked him to go and take *veśa*¹ from the *Mahanta* of Nārāyaṇa-chata Gauracaraṇa took *veśa*. He was given the name Śrī Govinda Dāsa *Mahantajī* asked him to remain with Rādhāramaṇa and be blessed by rendering loving service to him. Govinda Dāsa thus remained in the service of Śrī Rādhāramaṇa Carāṇa Dāsa Deva.

Rādhāramaṇa Bābā entrusted him with the service of collecting food-grains for the *āśrama* by *bhikṣā*. He went from door to door and collected *bhikṣā*. But he did not himself take food in the *āśrama*. He lived on whatever stuff was distributed to beggars by *kṣetra*.² In the *āśrama* on special occasions delicious food of various kinds was prepared and thousands of people, both invited and uninvited, ate to their hearts content. Even on such occasions Govinda Dāsa did not eat in the *āśrama*. He took only a small particle of something out of respect for *prasāda*. His God-brothers in the *āśrama* sometimes made great fun of him. They poured on him *khira*³ or sauce, the remnants of the banquet on such occasions and said, "You may keep away from *mahāprasāda* but how can *mahāprasāda* keep away from you. It will chase and hug you like this." After pouring the *prasāda* over his body they licked it as his *mahāprasāda*. Frolicsome Govinda added to the fun

¹ *Veṣṇava sannyāsa*.

² Place where food-stuff, which is generally of a very poor quality, is distributed to the beggars.

³ Pudding made from milk, rice and sugar.

by rebuking them for their impertinence in jest.

Apart from doing *bhikṣā* for the *āśrama* Govinda Dāsa used to be in the forefront in every activity of the *āśrama*. He was like Navadvīpa Dāsa the chief assistant of Rādhāramaṇa. Both were his two hands. Both were free and informal in their loving attitude and behaviour towards him.

One day Rādhāramaṇa Mahārāja called Navadvīpa early in the morning and said, "Look, both you and Govinda go for *bhikṣā* to every nook and corner of Purī and deliver to me whatever you get in *bhikṣā*." Both went to every lane and by-lane of Purī for *bhikṣā* everyday and gave Rādhāramaṇa whatever they got in *bhikṣā* on their return to the *āśrama*. One day, as soon as they returned to the *āśrama*, chanting the name, Govinda Dāsa delivered to Rādhāramaṇa the bag containing *bhikṣā* along with a volley of abuses. The *āśramites* stood aghast to hear him. Rādhāramaṇa Bābā also looked at him with surprise. But he made obeisance to Bābā and went and sat in the dining room. Bābā went to him and said in a soft tone, "Govinda! Have you gone mad?"

"Why, what has happened?" said Govinda.

"Why did you abuse me while delivering the bag of *bhikṣā*?"

"Abuses! I did not give any abuse. I got abuses in *bhikṣā*. You had asked me to deliver to you whatever I got in *bhikṣā*. I gave you the rice and pulses. How could I keep the abuses with me? Could I digest them, if I did? They could have generated hatred in my heart against the person, who gave them. Therefore I delivered them to you along with *bhikṣā*." Everyone laughed.

Bābā was happy to hear this. He embraced Govinda heartily and said with a voice choked with emotion, "Govinda! I am sold out to you on account of your innocent, artless and loving behaviour."

Bābā always encouraged Govinda's *sakhyā-bhāva* (free and friendly attitude) towards him. But when necessary for his spiritual well-being he did not refrain from being harsh to him.

Once Bābā Mahāśaya had gone to Kendrapādā near Cuttack with Govinda and others. Bābāji Mahāśaya was staying in the office of Śyāmasundara Bābū, while his followers were staying in his house. One morning he was looking very grave. At about seven o'clock he wrote a letter to Govinda Dādā and sent it to him through a boy. The letter was as follows.

"Dear Govinda. As soon as you receive this letter go on foot to Vṃdāvana Live in Rādhākūṇḍa on *mādhukari* and sweep Rādhākūṇḍa every day. No more meeting with me at present. We shall meet later at some other place, as Nīṭai Cānd has willed.

Vaiṣṇava Dāsanudāsa

[Servant of the servants of Vaiṣṇavas]

Rādhāramaṇa Carāṇa Dāsa."

The letter came to Govinda Dādā and others as a thunderbolt. Everyone said, "How and for what reason Bābāji Mahāśaya, who is ever so kind, has suddenly become so hard?"

After a little while, however, Govinda Dādā said slowly and coolly to the boy, who had brought the letter, "I shall comply. Let him be happy. Convey my *daṇḍavat* to him."

The boy returned and conveyed this to Bābā Mahāśaya. He remained quiet and grave as before. His attendant disciples also did not have the courage to speak to him. After a short while came Nityasvarūpa Brahmācari. He said, "If you kindly permit I may also go to Vṛndāvana with Govinda Dādā."

Bābājī: You can certainly go. I have no objection. Nityasvarūpa: If Govinda Dādā comes and performs *daṇḍavat* to you before leaving.

Bābājī: No! Mind your own business. Let alone others.

Nityasvarūpa could not say anything further. He went back with tears in his eyes and told Govinda Dādā everything. Then came two other disciples, Śyāmānada Dāsa and Nitāi Dāsa and asked for permission to go with Govinda Dādā. Bābā Mahāśaya permitted them as well. Śyāmasundara Bābū and others were standing before Bābā Mahāśaya and watching everything like wooden dolls, without saying anything.

Govinda Dādā, Nityasvarūpa Brahmācari, Śyāmānada Dāsa and Nitāi Dāsa could wait no longer. They started for Vṛndāvana singing:

*Bhaja Nitāi-Gaura, Rādhā Śyāma,
Japa Hare Kṛṣṇa-Hare Rāma.*

Tears were constantly flowing from their eyes. Those who saw them going were also weeping. The whole atmosphere was charged with lamentation. Only Bābājī Mahāśaya was sitting calm and quiet like one totally undisturbed and unconcerned. At this time Śyāmasundara Bābū came. Deeply aggrieved and agitated he lay prostrate before Bābā Mahāśaya and said in a voice trembling with fear, "I have a request. I want to give the four persons going to Vṛndāvana some money

for the journey. You should not object."

"What objection can I have?" said Bābā Mahāśaya. "If they accept you can give."

Śyāmasundara Bābū went and said to Govinda Dādā, "Govinda Dādā, I have brought some money for your journey, please accept. I have asked Bābā Mahāśaya also. He has no objection." Govinda Dādā said, "Oh, I see! My examination is not yet over," and he quickened his pace towards Vṛndāvana.

Śyāmasundara Bābū returned disappointed. He told Bābā Mahāśaya that Govinda Dādā refused to accept anything. Bābā Mahāśaya was pleased to hear this. There was now a change in him. With tears in his eyes he asked, "Has Govinda really gone?"

"Yes," said Śyāmasundara. "You sent him. I can still send someone to get them back, if you want."

"No, no. Don't do that. They are going to Vṛndāvana. You must not obstruct," replied Bābā Mahāśaya. He was again in tears as he said this.

Lalitā Dāsi had so far been looking for the right moment to say what she felt she must. She now came forward and said, "We never knew that you could be so hard-hearted. You did not even allow Govinda Dādā to come and make *daṇḍavat* to you before leaving. Now why shed crocodile tears?"

Bābājī: You people do not know. Good times are ahead for Govinda. By the grace of Nitāi Cānd he is going to Vṛndāvana and he will make good progress. Nitāi Cānd is never hard on any one.

Lalitā: We, the *jīvas* of Kali are too weak and imbecile. How can we in moments of adversity reconcile ourselves with it under the belief that it would be the harbinger of happiness?

Bābājī: When Nītā Cānd wants to shower His mercy upon anyone, He has also to prepare him for it. He is not ignorant like you. He is omniscient. He knows your weakness and shortcomings. He also knows how to remove them and does whatever is necessary towards that end.

Lalitā: May be, still I would like to know for what fault of his you gave Govinda this punishment?

Bābājī: Do you think that going to Vṇḍāvana, living in Rādhākunḍa are punishment? There are many *mahātmas*, who covet that kind of punishment.

Govinda Dāsa reached Vṇḍāvana. After seeing the Ṭhākuras of Vṇḍāvana and doing the *parikrama* of Govardhana he went to Rādhākunḍa. He lived there for six years and regularly did the service of sweeping around the *kunḍa*. He did not go anywhere even for a single day. If ever he went to Vṇḍāvana, he returned the same day, so that his service of Rādhākunḍa was not neglected. During this period he made much progress and the spiritual wealth he attained made him often shed tears in remembrance of the causeless mercy of Bābā Mahāśaya.

After six years when Bābā Mahāśaya went to Vṇḍāvana, he asked Govinda to go to Nīlācala. From Nīlācala he went to Navadvīpa with Bābā Mahāśaya. But Bābā Mahāśaya suddenly disappeared. He could not bear his separation. Life became difficult for him. Then one day Bābājī Mahāśaya appeared to him in a dream and asked him to go to Puri and look after the Haridāsa Ṭhākura Maṭha. At that time the condition of the Maṭha was so deplorable that it was about to be sold to a Christian priest.

Govinda Dāsa served the Maṭha with all his heart

and soul for twenty-two years. Then he went to Navadvīpa. In 1930 he left his body to meet Śrī Rādhāramaṇa Carāṇa Dāsa Deva in celestial Vṇḍāvana.

CHAPTER XII

ŚRĪ CAITANYA DĀSA BĀBAJĪ

(Kāchada/Purī)

The parents of Caitanya Dāsa, who lived in district Kāchada of Bengal, did not have any issue for a long time. They went to the temple of Mahāprabhu in Dhākā Dakṣiṇa in District Śrīhatta, made obeisance at the feet of Mahāprabhu and said to Him plaintively, "Benign Lord! You are ever so merciful. Have mercy on us and give us a child. We promise that if You kindly give us a son, we shall bring him up and finally surrender him at Your feet for Your service." His prayer was granted. He had a son. In consonance with his promise to Mahāprabhu, he named him Caitanya Dāsa. But he became so attached to him that he could not fulfil his promise. The son grew up, received proper education and began to earn his livelihood by doing service somewhere. He came to know about his father's promise to Mahāprabhu and became impatient to resign his job for the service of Mahāprabhu and thus to justify his name—Caitanya Dāsa and be blest.

One day he obtained permission from his parents to go to Dhākā Dakṣiṇa. In Dhākā Dakṣiṇa he went to the temple of Mahāprabhu, lay prostrate before Him, and prayed, "Prabhu! You accepted me as Your servant even before my birth. Now why keep me away from Your feet. Get me a guru under whose guidance I may

serve You with all my heart and soul."

Then he began to wander about in search of the guru. One day, while lying under a tree in Śāntipur he was thus praying and complaining to Mahāprabhu, "Since You have kindly brought me out of home and have to that extent released me from the clutches of Māyā, will You not get me a guru, who can finally deliver me from bondage and surrender me at Your lotus-feet? How long will I keep wandering like this without any guidance or support?" Praying and supplicating like this, he fell asleep. Then Mahāprabhu appeared to him in a dream and said, "Do not worry. Tomorrow, when you come for My *darśana* in Navadvīpa, you will meet your guru." He also told him about the features of the guru so that he might recognise him easily.

The next day he went for the *darśana* of Mahāprabhu to the Mahāprabhu Mandira in Navadvīpa at the time of *mangalā-ārati*.¹ As he stood in the courtyard of the temple, looking at Mahāprabhu he turned around again and again to see if there was anyone there whose features resembled the *mahapurūṣa*, described by Mahāprabhu. Once, as he did so, he saw the tall figure of a *mahātmā*, who seemed to be god-intoxicated and from whose wet and reddened eyes it appeared that he always swam in the ocean of divine love and compassion, standing behind him. He seemed to be the very *mahātmā* about whom Mahāprabhu had spoken. He fell at his feet and began to wash them with the tears of his eyes. The *mahātmā* lifted him and gave him a loving embrace. Caitanya Dāsa told him about the

¹ The first worship ceremony of the deity early in the morning.

person about whom Mahāprabhu had spoken to him in the dream and said, "Kindly bless me by giving *mantra* and accept me as your servant for ever."

The *mahāpuruṣa* asked him, "Are you Caitanya Dāsa? Do you live in district Kāchada?" As if Mahāprabhu had also told him about Caitanya Dāsa and asked him to initiate him, he immediately gave *mantra* in his ear. The *mahāpuruṣa* was Śrī Rādhāramaṇa Carāṇa Dāsa.

Since that day Caitanya Dāsa began to live with Rādhāramaṇa Carāṇa Dāsa. His devotion to him was exemplary. Whether he was asleep or awake, whether eating, drinking, talking or meditating, he thought of nothing and talked of nothing except the guru Śrī Rādhāramaṇa Carāṇa Dāsa. He was a *sādhaka* of *gopī-bhāva*. It is with him that the *upāsana* of *gopī-bhāva* began amongst the followers of Rādhāramaṇa Carāṇa Dāsa Bābājī.

After sometime Caitanya Dāsa fell ill. Rādhāramaṇa Carāṇa Dāsa sent him to Purī, and asked Navadvīpa Dāsa, who was then in Purī, to arrange for his treatment and look after him. Navadvīpa Dāsa lodged him in a room in the old post-office building of Harish Bābū and asked a boy, named Jayagopāla to attend upon him. His treatment continued for eight months. Jayagopāla served him with all his heart and soul. But his condition became worse and worse with every day that passed.

After eight months Rādhāramaṇa Carāṇa Dāsa went to Purī. On the Ratha-Yātrā day when Lord Jagannātha was being carried in *ratha* (Chariot) to Gundicā Mandira and his companions were singing and dancing in front of the *ratha*. When the *ratha* reached Rājabāri suddenly something transpired in his mind and he quietly slipped out of the *saṁkīrtana* procession. He entered

the Rāmacandi Lane and sat in the verandah of the house of Śrī Gopāla Prasāda Dutta, the head clerk of the local post-office. He looked very sad and grave, so sad and grave that people, who passed through the lane could not muster courage to ask him what worried him.

When Jayagopāla saw that Caitanya Dāsa was fast drawing towards death, he stood aghast and did not know what to do. Caitanya Dāsa said to him, "Jayagopāla, there is no cause at all for anxiety. You somehow manage to bring Gurudeva here. If you do that then alone I shall think that you are my true friend. I want to die while looking at Śrī Gurudeva. There is only one thing that I can give you in return for this service. That is the *aprakṛta* (transcendental) *gopī-bhāva*, so difficult to achieve even by the *Ṛṣis*, but which Gurudeva has kindly bestowed upon me. I heartily give the same to you. You have it, and even while you serve the Lord in this world experience the highest bliss of the transcendental world."

Now Navadvīpa Dāsa was going all round in search of Bābājī Mahāśaya. When he came to Caitanya Dāsa, he was very much alarmed to see his condition. Jayagopāla told him that he was too anxious to see Gurudeva before he died. Therefore he again set out in search of Bābājī Mahāśaya. He found him sitting in the verandah of Gopāla Prasāda Dutta in a pensive mood, completely oblivious of himself and the surroundings. Navadvīpa Dāsa said to him, "Caitanya Dāsa is dying. He wants to have your *darśana* before he passes away." There was no response from Bābājī Mahāśaya, not even a sign to show that he heard what Navadvīpa Dāsa had said. Navadvīpa Dāsa returned and sent

Jayagopāla to Bābājī Mahāśaya Jayagopāla was but a boy. He could hardly muster courage to go before Bābājī Mahāśaya, going to speak to him was out of question. But one does not know what *śakti*. Navadvīpa Dāsa gave him, he went and stood before Bābājī Mahāśaya and said commandingly "What kind of a *mahāpuruṣa* are you? Your disciple is dying and wants to have your *darśana* before he dies, but you are sitting here like one absolutely indifferent and unconcerned. Come, don't waste time." Bābājī Mahāśaya went and stood behind the bed of Caitanya Dāsa. Navadvīpa Dāsa said, "Caitanya, Dādā has come." Caitanya beckoned with his eyes to say that he might come and stand before him. Bābājī Mahāśaya moved towards his feet. Caitanya Dāsa observed him from head to feet, then fixed his eyes upon his face. Navadvīpa Dāsa lifted Bābājī Mahāśaya's right foot and placed it on Caitanya's chest. Tears came out of the eyes of Caitanya Dāsa as if he was tearfully bidding farewell to Bābājī Mahāśaya.

Bābājī Mahāśaya was so far standing motionless and speechless, but now his heart broke, and tears streamed out of his eyes. He said, with his throat choked with emotion, "O Caitanya! You are leaving me to go where peace and happiness reign supreme. What can I say, except that I take upon myself all your sins, past and present, so that you may go with a pure heart and attain the desired end—the loving service of the twin Lords of your heart—according to your *bhāva*."

Meanwhile the *ratha* of Jagannātha came up to Kundaibentsahi and stopped there. Bābājī Mahāśaya's dear disciple Rāma Dāsa had so far been singing and dancing before the *ratha*, but now suddenly he felt mysteriously attracted and came running with the *kīrtana*

party to Caitanya Dāsa. They were astonished to see a wondrous scene—a scene that was touching and delectable, inspiring and elevating. Caitanya's eyes were fixed on the face of Bābājī Mahāśaya and he was drowned in the ocean of bliss at the touch of his lotus feet. There was a smile on his face and horripilation all over his body as if he was not able to contain the happiness due to the realisation of the supreme end of life. They were all inspired to sing aloud.

Ha! Nitāi-Gaura Rādhā-Śyāma!

Ha! Hare Kṛṣṇa-Hare Rāma!

They sang with tears constantly streaming out of their eyes. All of a sudden they saw that the entire body of Caitanya Dāsa trembled as leaves tremble in the breeze. His eyes widened, he seemed to see something new in Bābājī Mahāśaya. He looked at him with exultation and astonishment, and with this he breathed his last. Shall we call this the end of life or the attainment of a life, much happier and peaceful?

Kīrtana continued for half an hour. During *kīrtana* Caitanya's face became more radiant. Navadvīpa Dāsa removed the cloth from his chest. He found two papers under it, one containing *guru-vadana* (prayers to the guru) and the other containing a hundred thousand names of Gurudeva, which showed his utter dedication to the feet of the guru. Bābājī Mahāśaya said with tears in his eyes and throat choked with emotion, "Nitai Cānd had kindly given me the company of such a pure and dedicated soul. I do not know why He has now deprived me of it."

The body of Caitanya Dāsa was taken to the seashore with a *kīrtana* procession. Bābājī Mahāśaya himself washed it with the water of the sea, dressed

it with his own *kaupina* and *bahirvāsa* and then clasped it and danced like one maddened with love. The face of Caitanya Dāsa rested on his shoulder and his arms were flung round his neck. Bābā continued the dance for a long time. Who could stop him from this? People, who saw this, were reminded of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu dancing with the dead body of Thākura Handāsa lifted in His arms.

After some time, when Bābājī Mahāśaya came to himself, Govinda Dāsa took the body of Caitanya Dāsa from him and laid it on the pyre of sandalwood. Fire was set to the pyre and everyone circumambulated the burning pyre, dancing and singing:

*'Ha! Nitāi-Gaura, Rādhē-Śyāma,
Ha! Hare Kṛṣṇa-Hare Rāma!'*

CHAPTER XIII

SAKHĪ KĪSORĪ DĀSĪ

(Calcutta/Purī)

[Sakhī Kīśorī Dāśī was an *upāsaka* of *sakhī-bhāva* and a companion of Lalitā Sakhī. She became *siddha* at an early age. A brief account of her life appears in *Carita Sudhā* Vol. VI, pp. 21-30 in the words of Śrī Rādhāramaṇa Carāṇa Dāsa Deva and Lalitā Sakhī. The same is here reproduced.]

One day, when Śrī Rādhāramaṇa Carāṇa Dāsa was staying in the Agara-pārhā Garden in Calcutta he suddenly emitted blood while washing his mouth in the morning. This made his companions anxious about his health. They said, "What could it be due to? Does it indicate some disease?" Bābā Mahāśaya replied, "This is due to some sorrowful happening in Purī." Then he went and lay in his room and covered himself with a *cādera* from head to feet. After half an hour he uttered "Kīśorī!" Then again he was quiet. At about 10:30 a.m. he got up and said to someone, "I will go to Purī today. Inform Pulin." He had hardly said this when Pulin came with a telegram in his hand. He said, "What news Pulin?" Seeing that Pulin was hesitant in replying he said, "I know that on the day following Rādhāstamī,¹ Rādhārānī ac-

¹ Rādhārānī's appearance day

cepted Kisorī Dāsī. She is blest. Arrange for my journey to Purī. I shall go today."

The news spread in Agarapārhā that Bābā Mahāśaya had suddenly decided to go to Purī. Many people came and began to inquire about the reason for this sudden decision.

Bābā Mahāśaya replied "Sometime ago a twenty year old boy named Advaita Dāsa took *mantra* from me and went to Vṛndāvana. After seeing all the holy places connected with the *līlā* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, he went to Barasānā. There he lived with *vairāgya* and swept the Temple of Rādhārānī. He did not talk with anyone. In the evening he covered his head with his *cādera* and danced before the Śrī Vighraha of Rādhārānī. In the dance he often lost himself in *bhāva*. The people of Barasānā loved him for his *bhāva-Bhakti*.

"One day Rādhārānī asked him in a dream to dance before Her in the *veśa* of a *gopī*. He ignored this as a mere dream. After three days Rādhārānī again appeared to him in a dream and said, 'You did not dance as I had said. Tomorrow I shall send you the dress of a *gopī*. You wear and dance before Me. Remember, that is your *siddha-veśa*'.

"The next day in the evening an old lady came with a *sāri* and a blouse and said to him, 'Bābā, you dance before Rādhārānī everyday. I like your dance very much. I give you this *sāri* and blouse so that you may wear them while dancing.' He began to dance in that dress. Slowly he became so much attached to the dress that he could not give it up, howsoever much he tried. People began to call him Kisorī Dāsī. After one year he went to Purī and engaged himself in the service of Rādhākānta Deva in Jhānjaptā Maṭha. Everyone was

charmed by his *bhāva* and loving service of the deities. During the period of his service the deities put on a new appearance. They looked so beautiful that even I sometimes wondered whether They were the same Śrī Vighrahas or different. Rādhārānī accepted him yesterday and engaged him in Her loving service in *nitya-līlā* for all times. I am happy at this. But I am sorry to have been deprived of his company, because his very sight inspired *Kṛṣṇa-līlā* in my heart."

Soon Bābā Mahāśaya took leave of everyone to go to Purī. As soon as he reached Jhānjaptā Maṭha, Lalitā Dāsī and others began to weep on account of the demise of Kisorī Dāsī. Bābā Mahāśaya consoled them and inquired all about her. Lalitā Dāsī said, "After you had gone from here, one day we received the news that you had left Medinipur without telling anyone where you were going. This caused anxiety and despondency in the heart of everyone. All of a sudden Kisorī Dāsī came to me and said 'Bābā Mahāśaya has left us all and gone. We know not where. Navadvīpa Dādā, Gokula Dādā and Cartanya Dādā have broken the cord of affection with us and gone to the land of *līlā* from where there is no return. You are always indisposed. If you also go, who will take care of us? Whose affection shall be the prop and support of our life? How shall we live?'

"I said, 'You need not have any fear or anxiety on account of me. Thousands of *dāsīs* like me lie under the lotus feet of Rādhārānī, to Whom you are surrendered. You are also so dear to Her. You should whole-heartedly and ceaselessly do the service. She has kindly assigned to you. You will without doubt realize what you want.'

"Kisorī: No Mā, my anxiety is deep. I do not know what I should do.

"I said, 'Foolish! Why be so desperate. You know that our Lord is merciful. He always takes care of us and fulfils all our desires and aspirations.'

"Kisorī: If He is so merciful, I promise that I shall pray to Him with all my heart and shall try to leave the body before you.

"I tried laughingly to trifle with her and said, 'Well, well, you need not waste your time in frivolous talks. Go and do your work.'

"She went. After a few days I looked at her and said, 'Kisorī! I can see from your face that you are in anxiety. What is it about?'

"Kisorī: Nothing particular Mā. I only keep thinking when Rādhārānī will fulfil my desire.

"Since I had forgotten all about the aforesaid conversation, I thought she was referring to her *sādhana*. So, I said, 'Speak your heart to Rādhārānī. When She has accepted you in Her service, She is bound to fulfil your desire. Do not worry.'

"Kisorī: I do not worry, but I have to make two requests to you. If you promise to comply I would say

"I said, 'Kisorī, you are childish. Alright, I promise I shall do what you say as far as I can.'

"Kisorī: My first request is that when I am about to die, you remind me of the name of my *siddha-svarūpa* (transcendental body). My second request is that you kindly see that at the time of my death nothing happens that is contrary to my *veṣa* and *bhāva*.

"This time, on account of the *bhāva* I saw in her face, I could not trifle with what she said. I said, 'Kisorī, you always hurt me by talking like a mad person.

Why not attend with all your heart and soul to the sweet and valuable service assigned to you and be blest?'

"Kisorī: What can I do? I doubt whether I shall be able to serve till Rādhāṣṭamī.

"Just a day before Rādhāṣṭamī she called me and said, 'Mā! I will not be able to do *ṭhākura-seva*² today. Please ask Govardhana to do it.' I did the same. But I was filled with anxiety. I called *kavirāja* Dhulirath and asked him to examine her. He examined and said, 'She is perfectly well. I do not understand why you are so anxious about her. There is nothing at all to fear.' I was not satisfied. I called a doctor. He also examined and said, 'I do not see any cause for anxiety. She has very mild fever. I shall give her medicine and she would be alright today.'

"Kisorī refused to take medicine. But when I insisted she said with a smile, 'Well, do as you please.' I gave her the medicine.

"The next day was Rādhāṣṭamī. I was busy on account of the festival. So I could not attend upon her in the morning. In the afternoon she called me and said, 'My only concern is that in my last moment I shall not get the *darśana* of Bābā Mahāśaya.'

"I said, 'Kisorī! You have no ailment except slight fever. Why are you so apprehensive?'

"Kisorī: Believe me, I feel that by Rādhārānī's grace and your blessings I shall leave this body tomorrow between 8.30 and 9 a.m. Therefore you should not start cooking in the early hours of the morning as you do everyday.

"I burst into tears and said, 'Kisorī! Will you really

² Service to the deities.

leave us all and go?

"Kīśorī Mā! By your blessings it appears that it will be so. You decorate me and send me to Vraja happily I am sorry that I have to leave your sweet company and to go without having the *darśana* of Bābā Mahāśaya

"As she said this she threw her arms round my neck and began to weep like a child. After sometime she contained herself and asked for *mahāprasāda*. Kusuma Dāśī brought Rādhākānta's and Jagannātha Deva's *mahāprasāda*. With her own hand she gave a little *mahāprasāda* in the mouth of each one of us and herself took our *adharāmrta*.

"The next day early in the morning we started *kīrtana* round her. At 8.30 I saw that she was slowly sinking. According to her desire I uttered her *siddha* name in her ear. As soon as she heard the name her face became radiant and there was a smile on her face. I placed a garland of *Mukundavilasa*³ round her neck. Others decorated her by putting a vermilion mark on her forehead and *ālā*⁴ round her feet. We were singing, *Bhaja Nitāi-Gaura Rādhē-Śyāma, japa Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Rāma*. She started singing with us. Suddenly she shouted '*Rādhē Prāṇeśvarī*'⁵ and became silent for ever. Her face was still radiant with a smile and her eyes were wide open and fixed on some object. It appeared that she was looking at something most astonishing and attractive when she breathed her last."

As Lalitā Dāśī concluded the story of Kīśorī Dāśī's

³ A kind of fragrant flower

⁴ Red liquid to decorate the feet.

⁵ Queen of my heart.

entrance into the *nitya-līlā*, she began to weep. Bābā Mahāśaya was moved to the core of his heart. He said with a voice choked with emotion and eyes filled with tears, "Kīśorī Dāśī has left an ideal for the *upāsakas* of *madhura-rasa*. Her demise reminds me of the *nityānā*⁶ of Thākura Haridāsa."

⁶ Deliverance.

CHAPTER XIV

ŚRĪ LALITĀ SAKHĪ DĀSĪ

(Purī/Navadvīpa)

Śrī Gopāla Kṛṣṇa (Lalitā Sakhi Dāsī) was born in 1873 on the *guru-pūrnimā* day in village Hansenā of district Barisāla. His father's name was Kālikānta Bhattachārya and mother's Gaurasundarī Devī Śrī Rāmacandra Sarvajña, a famous astrologer saw his horoscope and predicted that he would renounce the world and that he was born to set up an ideal of *bhājana* for the benefit of mankind.

As he grew, his extraordinary intelligence and devotion to learning surprised everyone. His wonderful power of retaining in memory whatever he read or heard once enabled him to learn Sanskrit grammar and the Vedas etc. within a short time. Therefore people thought he would be a Digvijayī pandita.¹ Some, who were impressed by his extraordinary aptitude for service and various kinds of philanthropic activities professed that he would be a great social worker, while some, who saw him performing yogic exercises, which enabled him to rise one foot above the ground while sitting cross-legged opined that he would be a great yogi. But the real trend of his life became known by certain happenings.

¹ Pandita, who excels all other panditas of the world in learning.

which took place when he was still young.

Once on the occasion of Holi festival Gopāla and his *kīrtana* party were going round the village, singing and dancing. On the way they met the *kīrtana*-party of Śrī Kārtikacandra Sarvajña. On seeing Gopāla Kārtikacandra was inspired to sing. He sang a number of *Holī* songs with great zest and emotion. As he sang the two parties sprinkled *gulāla* on each other and shouted 'Haribol'. After Kārtikacandra had sung he asked Gopāla to sing. Gopāla began to sing in his sweet voice:

*“āja holī khelaba śyāma tomāra sara /
ekalā payechi tomāre nidhubane //*

—O Śyāma! Alone in Nidhubane have I found
Thee today

Freely *Holī* with Thee shall I play

Gopāla sang and the others repeated. When the others sang Gopāla sprinkled *gulāla* on them and danced twisting his limbs in various ways to illustrate the *bhāva* of the song. This continued for some time. Then suddenly, possessed, as it were, by a *bhāva* current, he caught the old Kārtikacandra with both of his hands and began to sing.

*“se dina baḍa pāhyā chile
āja śāsti pābe niṭhura kālā /*

—O hard-hearted, black-faced One!

That day Thou ran away

A good lesson shall I teach today!

Kīrtana parties also were inspired and shouted 'Haribol.' Their shouts rent the sky. The body of Kārtikacandra Mahāśaya began to tremble with *bhāva* and tears streamed out of his eyes, while Gopāla sang again and again

“se dina baḍa pāhyā chile

*āja śāstrī pābe niṭhura kālā*²

In the state of *bhāva* Kārtikacandra threw his left hand round the waist of Gopāla and began to dance, making different kinds of movements and gestures with the right hand. The *Haribol* sound of the *kirtana* parties and the *huludhvani*² of the ladies again rent the sky.

Kārtikacandra Mahāśaya once said that in course of *kirtana* that day he had seen Gopāla dancing in the form of a *gopī* of celestial Vraja.

On another occasion people were surprised to see Gopāla transported into a state of deep trance or *samādhi*. It was the *Rāsotsava* (*Rasa*-celebration) day. On that day, as usual, the people of the village had prepared a revolving *manca*³ with bamboos, on which the Thākura was seated. A string was tied to the *manca*, with which the *pujārī* was to make the *manca* revolve. Since the *pujārī* could not come, Gopāla was asked to function in his place. As Gopāla was revolving the *manca*, he sang the *rāsa-śloka*s from the *Bhāgavatam*. After some time he suddenly fell unconscious on the ground. When he regained consciousness people asked what had happened to him. He said, "As I was revolving the *manca*, I saw that Rādhā-Govinda were dancing in a beautifully decorated garden and innumerable *gopīs* were dancing round Them in a state of bliss. Suddenly the *līlā* disappeared and I fell senseless."

Once on the Ekādaśī day Gopāla was fasting. At night the *purohita*⁴ was narrating *kathā* (story) regarding

² A special kind of sound made by Bengālī ladies with their mouth on auspicious occasions.

³ Scaffold with a seat at the top.

⁴ Family priest.

the Ekādaśī fast. As soon as he said that Śrī Bhagavān appeared from the womb of Devaki in the prison of Kāṁsa, Gopāla fell unconscious. In that state he began to roll on the ground and chant the *Bhāgavatam śloka* relating to the appearance of Bhagavān: *'tasyā jāto Jagannātha kāmāsārī vasudeva-ajah*. The *purohita* began to chant aloud the *"Varhāpīṇam natavaravapuh śloka* and the other *śloka*s regarding the *līlā* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The *purohita* chanted the *śloka*s and Gopāla repeated them, while still unconscious. The people were surprised to see this. They said to each other, "It seems that Gopāla is seeing the *līlā* as he chants. He is blest."

When the states and experiences of this kind became more frequent, Gopāla became more secretive. If anyone asked him about them, he said they were due to certain infirmities of mind. But if someone insisted beyond limit, he said

*'pūtul-bājira pūtula āmī /
jemana nācāya hrdaya svāmī //*
*temni nāci temani gāi /
āmāra kichu jānate nāi //*

—I am a doll in the hands of the Magician,
I dance as He makes me dance.
I sing as He makes me sing—The Lord, who
sits in my heart.
I do not know how and why."

Ever since Gopāla's sacred thread ceremony was performed, he wore saffron clothes and wooden sandals and led an austere life. He was the very figure of austerity and continence. When his relations suggested that he should marry, he said, "I have motherly regard for every woman. How can I marry?" This made his parents anxious about his future.

One day a good astrologer came to the house of Kalikānta. Everyone showed his palm to him. Gopāla's mother held the hand of Gopāla and producing it before the astrologer said, "Mahārāja! Kindly read his hand!"

As soon as the astrologer saw Gopāla's hand, he began to look at his face again and again. After examining the hand more carefully he said, "I have seen so many hands in my life, but never one like this. It has all the signs of a *mahāpuruṣa*. The boy will not stay at home. He will have a powerful guru. By his grace he will rise on the spiritual horizon of this country as one of the brightest luminaries and will set up an ideal of *bhajana-sādhana* for the people to follow and be blest. But there is a unique sign in his hand, which indicates that he will pass all his life under a different guise."

Gopāla remarked laughingly, "Mahārāja! Why don't you say plainly that I shall be a chief of dacoits and that for fear of being caught I shall besmear ashes on my body and live like a *sannyāsī*, or to further fortify myself against detection, I shall sit at home dressed and veiled like a woman."

He said this in jest. But knowingly or unknowingly he indicated his natural *sakhi-bhāva*, which was about to manifest itself soon in his life. He was at this time 17 or 18 years old. One day he went out of home under the pretext of going for a bath in the Ganges and left a note at home, in which he had written, "I am going out for an indefinite period. No one should try to search me. When necessary I shall myself send a message."

Gopāla went to Haridavāra. There he remained in hiding in the *āśrama* of Svāmī Hariharānanda and

practised yoga under his guidance. After sometime he went to Purī, where he met Navadvīpa Dāsa and Govinda Dāsa, the two disciples of Śrī Rādhāramaṇa Carāṇa Dāsa Bābājī. He found their company enjoyable and inspiring and remained with them.

At that time Rādhāramaṇa Bābājī had arrived in Cuttack by the sea route from Calcutta and was about to come to Purī from Cuttack. The people of Purī had made elaborate arrangements for his reception at the station. Many were standing there to garland him with wreaths of flowers offered to Jagannātha. Navadvīpa Dāsa did not go to the station, because of some love quarrel with him. He sent Gopāla with the *prasādi*⁵ garland and *tulasī* of Jagannātha. Gopāla had not seen Bābājī Mahāśaya before. Therefore Navadvīpa Dāsa told him that he should stand aside with garlands in his hand and go to garland him only when he called him by name.

When Bābā Mahāśaya got down from the train people began to garland him. Gopāla kept watching from a distance. After sometime Bābā came forward and said, "Gopāla! You also have come. Come, give me your garland." As he said this, he lifted Gopāla in his lap. Gopāla garlanded him and mentally surrendered himself at his feet for ever. Bābā also indicated by taking him in his lap that he had accepted him. He changed his name from Gopāla to Jayagopāla, which meant that with his acceptance a new life had begun for him.

Eight months had now elapsed since Bābā Mahārāja had sent Cartanya Dāsa, one of his dearest disciples to Purī for his treatment. Jayagopāla had been attending

⁵ Anything offered to the Deity

upon him. He passed away, but he was so pleased with Jayagopāla's service that before passing away he bestowed his *gopi-bhāva*, the highest spiritual treasure he had upon him. This became known through his general attitude and behaviour in the *āśrama* and a number of episodes that followed.

Jayagopāla was still a boy, but he had made himself dear to everyone in the *āśrama* by his service. He was not interested so much in *kīrtana* as in the service of Śrī guru and the Vaiṣṇavas. He had taken upon himself the task of cooking and serving in the *āśrama*, but dearer than anything else to him was the service of Bābhāji Mahāśaya. Navadvīpa Dāsa had trained him in this. Externally he was always engaged in service, but internally his *bhāva* was that of a *sakhī* (girl companion of Rādhārānī). He imagined that the *āśrama* was the *kunja* of Rādhārānī and the Vaiṣṇavas in the *āśrama* Her *sakhīs*, and that his service of the *āśrama* and the Vaiṣṇavas was service to Rādhārānī and Her *sakhīs*. Some other Vaiṣṇavas of the *āśrama* also had *sakhī-bhāva*. As an external aid to that *bhāva* they kept their heads covered with a part of the *cāḍara* they wore, like females. They often danced in that *bhāva* for the pleasure of Lord Jagannātha in the temple.

One day Madhava Paṣupālaka, the *śringāri-pandā*⁶ of Jagannātha came to visit Bābhāji Mahāśaya and gave him the *careṇa-tulasī*⁷ of Jagannātha and His *prasādi-mālā*⁸. At that time Jayagopāla was standing behind

⁶ The *pandā* or servant whose duty is to dress and decorate Lord Jagannātha.

⁷ *Tulasī*-leaves offered at the feet of Lord Jagannātha.

⁸ The flower garland worn by Lord Jagannātha.

Bābhāji Mahāśaya and was fanning upon him. Mādhava Paṣupālaka said, "Bābā, when I see this boy and some of his companions dancing before Jagannātha they appear to me like the *sakhīs* of Vraja. You will be surprised to know that one day, when I was offering *dhūpa* (incense) to Jagannātha, I actually saw them wearing *ghāgarā*⁹ like the *sakhīs* of Vraja. I said to myself, 'Perhaps Bābhā Mahāśaya has made them put on the *sakhī-veśa* (the dress of the *sakhīs* of Vraja) today. Oh! How beautiful they look.' Exactly when I was lost in this thought, the *mālā* (garland) worn by Jagannātha slipped and fell down. I thought that had some special significance. So I brought and gave that *mālā* to you, and you gave it to this boy. That day I could not reveal this secret to you. Today, as prompted by Jagannātha, I have specially come to tell you all about it."

Bābhāji Mahāśaya said, "You are a favourite of Jagannātha. You can make even the impossible possible. Kindly bless him so that his desire is fulfilled and he fully realizes the *bhāva* he covets." As he said this he made a gesture to Jayagopāla, and Jayagopāla lay prostrate before the *śringāri* in obeisance. The *śringāri* placed his hand over his head and said, "May Jagannātha bless you."

As if a step in immediate fulfilment of the wish and blessings of Jagannātha, which the *śringāri-pandā* had brought in the shape of His garland, Bābhāji Mahāśaya performed a *līlā*. He asked Kunja Bābū, to sing one of his *kīrtana* song, relating to Rādhārānī's standing on

⁹ A woman's dress reaching from the waist to the ankles, with numerous folds, which spread out at the time of dancing.

the flat roof of Tungamani Mandira to see Kṛṣṇa going to the forest, was sung. Jayagopāla made Rādhārāṇī (the deity) stand on a *caukī* (small base). With every change in the *bhāva* of the *kirtana* he made the necessary changes in the dress, position, and movement of the deities, to assist in the visualization of Their *goṣṭa-līlā*.¹⁰ When the *kirtana* described the meeting of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in Rādhākunḍa, he made Rādhārāṇī sit by the side of Kṛṣṇa. He and Advaita Dāsa stood behind to fan upon Them. Rādhāgovinda, Kīśorīgopāla and four or five others started dancing in front of the deities. Bābājī Mahāśaya then began to sing a song describing the beauty and glory of Rādhākunḍa. Every one danced and sang in ecstasy, but Jayagopāla was weeping constantly. Tears were incessantly flowing from his eyes. Suddenly he fell unconscious near the deities. At this time Bābājī Mahāśaya came dancing near him and uttered a *mantra* in his ear. He got up, flung one end of his *cāḍara* over his head and went and sat in a corner of the temple, sobbing and weeping. Just then came a man holding a *sārī* in his hands and said, "Jagannātha, sitting in my heart, told me that one of you needs a *sārī*. So I have brought it. Who will wear it?" Navadvīpa Dāsa made Bābājī Mahāśaya wear the *sārī*. The situation aroused *sakhi-bhāva* in his mind and he began to dance like one possessed by a *sakhi* of Vraja. Tears of love constantly streamed out of his eyes and *sattvika-bhāvas* appeared all over his body. Others caught the emotional current emanating from him and they also began to dance and sing madly under the spell of that *bhāva*.

¹⁰ *Līlā* relating to Kṛṣṇa's going to the forest for tending cows.

After about an hour Bābājī Mahāśaya came to his own. He then gave the *sārī* to Navadvīpa and whispered something into his ear. Navadvīpa went and made Jayagopāla wear the *sārī*. After Jayagopāla had worn it, he brought him near Bābājī Mahāśaya, holding him by the arm, and made him surrender at his feet. Bābā Mahāśaya said in a voice choked with emotion, "Rādhārāṇī has—out of Her infinite kindness—bestowed this sublimest and sweetest *bhāva* upon you. Retain it carefully and be happy *Veśā* (outward form) alone will not do any good. You have to live according to this *bhāva* in thought, word and deed. In *sakhi-bhāva* one cannot even for a moment think of one's own happiness. You will have to convert this *bhāva* into *svabhāva*, that is, you will have to make it completely your own, your natural disposition. Until this is done the *bhāva* will not be permanent. The best way of doing this is constantly serving Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa according to this *bhāva*."

Navadvīpa Dāsa then asked, "Now, what name should we give him?"

Bābā said, "What name do you propose?"

"I wish that he should henceforth be called Lalitā Dāsi."

So he began to be called Lalitā Dāsi. Henceforth Jayagopāla was not Jayagopāla. He was Lalitā Dāsi in the true sense. He always dressed himself as a *gopī*, and was like a *gopī* in thought, word and deed.

Lalitā Dāsi continued to serve as cook in the *āśrama*. Bābā Mahārāja kept an eye on her and whenever knowingly or unknowingly she made any mistake, he corrected her in a manner, in which it served as a lesson not only to her, but to every one else in the *āśrama*. One day he was sitting and talking to people

at a place, from where he could see the kitchen and the store-room. He saw that a mouse was trying again and again to enter an earthen pot, but could not because its mouth was closed. He became restless to see that and asked someone to call Lalitā Dāśī. When Lalitā came he asked her what was there in that pot. She replied, "It contains some rice obtained in *bhikṣā*. I have kept it for tomorrow." "Tomorrow! I see," said Bābā with his face reddened with anger. He added, "If you must collect for tomorrow and day after, where was the necessity of your leaving home and becoming a recluse?"

A disciple said, "Today I got some extra rice in *bhikṣā*. So I kept the extra quantity for tomorrow. Lalitā Dāśī is not to blame."

Bābā said angrily, "Shut-up. I do not want any explanation. You are all a group of bandits, who have collected here." As he said this, he went to the store-room and broke the earthen pot with a staff. Then he said, "Whatever *bhikṣā* you collect and whatever comes to the *āśrama*, you must consume the same day or give away to the poor and the needy. You must not keep even a particle for the next day. If any of you does so, he will not have a place in this *āśrama*." Then looking at Lalitā he said, "Do you get this rice from your father's land? You get it in *bhikṣā*. It is the mouse's as much by right as yours. Have you learnt the lesson that one must not hurt any creature in any manner only to preach it to others? You are all the slaves of Kali. You must fast and chant *Harināma* throughout the day and night today. Tomorrow morning you must bathe in the sea then go for the *darśana* to Siddha Bakula, Gambhirā and Jagannātha and circumambulate the temple of Jagannātha three times before you return to the *āśrama*

and take your *prasāda*." Everyone had to obey.

One day when everyone in the *āśrama* had taken *mahāprasāda* and Lalitā Dāśī had collected the utensils used in the service of the deity and kept them outside the kitchen, she began to wash her feet near the utensils. Bābā Mahāśaya saw her doing this. She felt ashamed and went and washed her feet elsewhere. In the evening she suddenly developed severe pain in her right leg. At night, when Bābā Mahāśaya returned from Jagannātha's Temple someone in the *āśrama* told him about this. He smiled and said, "Does she know why she got the pain?" He replied, "No, no one knows how she got it."

Bābā Mahāśaya did not say anything further, but he kept asking Lalitā Dāśī to do what she could without walking. She continued to do everything, though with great difficulty. Two days passed like this. The pain did not subside. The third day at midnight, when she was alone in her room and was not able to sleep on account of the pain, she said to herself, "I do not know what has caused this pain. I must have committed some offense." She began to think what offense she had committed. Suddenly the thought came to her mind that she had washed her feet over the utensils used in the service of the Lord, and Bābā Mahāśaya had seen her doing so. That must be the cause of her pain, she thought. Surprisingly, as soon as the thought came the pain began to ameliorate. The next morning Bābā Mahāśaya called her. She went smiling. Bābā asked, "I see you smiling. Perhaps the pain is gone. What medicine did you take?"

Lalitā: No medicine. The relief came automatically with the discovery of the cause.

Bābājī: Could you discover the real cause?

Lalitā: I think the cause was the washing of my

feet over the utensils.

Bābājī Undoubtedly that was the cause. Mahāprabhu has asked you to regard even a blade of grass as superior to you. You should know that a thing used in the service of Kṛṣṇa is far more superior. It is *cinnmaya* (transcendental).

Lalitā I know that. But I did not commit the offense intentionally. As soon as I realized what I was doing I stepped aside. But if I could not immediately realize what was the cause of the pain, you knew it, because you saw me washing my feet over the utensils. Could you not point it out and save me from the agony I suffered for three days?

Bābājī. If I had told you about this perhaps you would not have believed. Now whenever this kind of thing happens, you will be reminded of this episode and will begin self-exploration. There is no remedy for the suffering caused by an offense of this kind except self-exploration and self-reproachment.

After sometime Lalitā Dāsī fell ill. Another disciple of Bābājī Mahāśaya took upon himself the task of cooking. He had been earlier debarred from all kinds of service, because he had displeased Gaurāṇa Dāsa Bābājī Mahāśaya. The Gurudeva of Bābājī Mahāśaya by his behaviour. But because he entered the kitchen and started cooking of his own, no one thought it fit to prevent him from cooking for fear of displeasing him. When most of the cooking was done, a big cat entered the kitchen. Bābā Mahāśaya saw the cat coming out of the kitchen. He called Lalitā Dāsī and asked her to go and see if it had eaten anything. Lalitā Dāsī went and saw that it had eaten part of everything cooked. She came back and said, "The cat has eaten part of everything cooked. Forty kilos of rice has been cooked and corresponding

amounts of pulses and vegetables. What shall we do now with them?

Bābājī. What else can you do? Since they cannot be offered to the Lord, you must bury them. Do you know why this has happened? The Lord does not accept the service of a man, who has displeased a *mahātmā* or a Vaiṣṇava.

This cautioned everyone in the *āśrama* against Vaiṣṇava *aparādha* (the offense committed against a Vaiṣṇava).

One day about 2 o'clock, when Lalitā Dāsī, Kusuma Manjarī Dāsī and some other *sakhīs* were taking *mahāprasāda* beside the kitchen, a cat came and sat near them. Lalitā Dāsī, who was already full of malice against the cat, on account of the aforementioned episode, gave it a slap on the face with her left hand. The cat ran away crying. Bābā Mahāśaya heard it cry, but did not say anything. In the evening Lalitā Dāsī began to feel excruciating pain in the left hand. Two days passed in agony, but the pain did not subside. When some people in the *āśrama* told Bābā Mahāśaya about it and requested him to arrange for some medicine, he said, "What can medicine do? If medicine cured all diseases, no one would suffer. She must do self-exploration and find out the cause." When Lalitā Dāsī was told about this she understood that Bābā Mahāśaya had again hinted at some *aparādha* (offense). She began to explore what *aparādha* she had committed. At night it came to her mind that the cause possibly was the slap she had inflicted on the cat. The moment she thought of it the pain was considerably reduced.

The next morning when Bābā Mahāśaya saw that she was at work as usual, he said, "You seem to have

been relieved of the pain. How did you get rid of it?

Lalitā: That day a cat came and sat before me while I was eating and I gave it a slap. The moment I thought that that might be the cause of the pain, I began to feel relief.

Bābājī: Yes, that was the cause.

Lalitā: But since the cat is regarded as inauspicious and prejudicial to the service of Kṛṣṇa, I do not understand why it should be an offense to beat and expel it from the place of service. It was the same cat that spoiled the Thākura's *bhoga* that day. Should I, therefore, have caressed it instead of beating?

Bābājī: Cat may be prejudicial to the service of Kṛṣṇa. But should it for that reason be debarred from the *adharāmṛta* of Kṛṣṇa? The hungry creature came to you in the hope of getting a handful of *mahāprasāda*. But you gave it a slap and made it cry and run. How cruel! If in this *āśrama* also you drive it away like this, who will treat it better? Every creature is a servant of Kṛṣṇa. If you ill treat it will not Kṛṣṇa be displeased? Do not the *śāstras* enjoin that you should regard even the smallest of the creatures as worshipable? If you do not do this you have no right to call yourself a Vaiṣṇava.

Once almost everyone in the *āśrama* was laid down with fever. Bābā Mahāśaya was also unwell. But Lalitā Dāsī's condition was serious. Slowly most of the *āśramites* recovered, but Lalitā Dāsī's condition continued to deteriorate. She could not even sit up on the bed. If someone made her sit, she fainted. But she was worried not so much on account of her illness as on account of her being deprived of the service of Bābā Mahārāja, who was still unwell. She wept because of this. When her condition became very critical, a number of the inmates

of the *āśrama* went to Bābā Mahārāja and said, "It appears that Lalitā Dāsī will not survive. You must do something to save her."

Bābā said, "She lives by service—service of the guru and the Vaiṣṇavas. Since she is now deprived of service, she is for all practical purposes dead. Every moment that she breathes, she experiences the pain of death. In this state it is better that she ceases to breathe. You should bless her so that she is relieved of this pain soon."

One day Lalitā was weeping bitterly. Madhu Dādā, who was always by her side and tried to console her, asked, "Why are you weeping so much today? Are you feeling much worse?" She replied, "What shall I say? I am trying my best to leave my body. But every one seems to be against it. I thought that Navadvīpa Dādā¹¹ would show mercy on me and take me where he is. He also did not prove helpful. Now I do not know how long I will continue to trouble you all." Madhu said, "No Didi! Don't say that. No trouble for us. But tell me what transpired between you and Navadvīpa Dādā."

Lalitā said, "Yesterday night I was feeling very aggrieved to think that Navadvīpa Dādā was so indifferent towards me that he did not even once appear to me in dream. As I was thinking like this, I fell asleep and saw that Navadvīpa Dādā was sitting near me with his hand on my chest and saying with a sweet smile on his face, 'Lalitā! What has happened to thee?' I said,

¹¹ One of the foremost disciples of Śrī Rādhārāmanya Carana Dāsa Deva and a *Siddha Mahāpuruṣa*, who had left his body earlier.

'Dādā! You have gone. Also take me away. I am in great distress.' Dādā said with a smile, 'Live for some more time to serve Dādā¹² if you come away. Dādā will be very much inconvenienced.' I said, 'Yes, as if I am rendering great service to him. Instead of doing any service, I am myself taking service from him. You kindly have mercy on me. I do not want to live as a burden to others. I want to be with you.' But he did not agree. Therefore I request you all to forgive my offenses and bless me so that I may leave this body and be born life after life with a body suitable for the service of your Prabhu.' Then, as if she was going to leave the body immediately, she said, 'Just now I have no request, no desire except that the benign and ever so merciful Prabhu gave me *darśana* once in my last moment.' With this she began to weep. Madhu Dādā sat by her side and began to chant *Harināma*. Her body began to become cool. Just then Bābā Mahārāja returned from Jagannātha temple and went straight to the room where Lalitā was lying. As soon as Madhu Dādā saw him, he began to weep loudly. Lalitā Dāsī was unable to rise and sit on the bed or say something. She alone knows what she said to him in her mind. Tears began to stream out of her eyes. Bābā Mahārāja kept standing still for some time. Then he said, 'This is what Nītāi Cānd wills. Let His will be done,' and went. While going he touched her right hand with the great toe of his left foot in such a way that no one else could see.

Lalitā Dāsī said to Madhu Dādā in a soft voice,

¹² Navadvīpa used to call Bābā Mahārāja 'Dādā.'

'Dādā! I had prayed to Prabhu in my mind for kindly giving me *darśana* in my last moment. He not only mercifully gave *darśana*, but also blessed me by his touch.' As she said this tears streamed out of her eyes.

Bābā Mahārāja went and said to some of his disciples, 'Lalita is going to breathe her last. You take her to the temple.' They went running to her and saw that she was actually breathing her last. They lifted her carefully and began to take her to the temple. They had hardly gone a few steps when they saw that her eyes had become fixed and breathing had stopped. They thought that her last moment had come. As asked by Bābā Mahārāja they laid her down before the Thākura.

Śrī Mādhava Dāsa Bābājī, the elder god-brother of Bābājī Mahārāja was at that time in the *āśrama*. He asked him and the other Vaiṣṇavas to forgive her for whatever offenses she might have committed knowingly or unknowingly and bless her by placing their feet over her forehead, so that she might leave this body and attain appropriate transcendental body to serve Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa according to her *bhāva*. They did likewise. At this time three *Vrajavāsī* Vaiṣṇavas happened to come. Bābā Mahārāja made obeisance to them and asked them also to bless Lalitā Dāsī by placing their feet upon her head. At first they declined, but when Bābā Mahārāja told them about her qualities as an ideal devotee, they complied. When they had done so, Mādhava Dāsa Bābājī said to Bābā Mahārāja, 'We gave her the dust of our feet. Why didn't you? I believe that as soon as you bless her with the touch of your foot, she will be alright.' Bābā Mahārāja said, 'You believe, whether she believes or not.' Mādhava Dāsa Bābā said, 'At the moment there is no question of her belief, because she is lying dead.'

It is my belief that will work." As he said this, he took Bābā Mahārāja by his hand near her Bābā Mahārāja placed his right foot over her forehead and said, '*Jai Nītāi. Jai Nītāi!*' Immediately life came back to the dead body of Lalitā Dāśī. As soon as she opened her eyes and saw Bābā Mahārāja, she sat up.

Bābā Mahārāja said to her, "You are extremely fortunate. You had the touch of the feet of three *Vṛndāvanavāsī-mahātmās*. Their blessings have given you a new life. Make obeisance to them." Lalitā Dāśī bowed down to them and the other Vaiṣṇavas.

Bābā Mahārāja said, "Look, you have committed an offense against the Ṭhākura. Since He has now forgiven you, you should pray to Him, asking for *śakti* so that you never commit an offense again."

Lalitā: What offense I have committed I do not know. Kindly tell me.

Bābāji: Your offense is that apart from the *bhoga* that is offered to Ṭhākura in the *āśrama* as a part of the routine *sevā*, there are other food stuffs that devotees give to the *āśrama* from time to time. You give them to us without offering them to the Ṭhākuras.

Lalitā: Is that an offense against the Ṭhākura? That is an offense against you.

Bābāji: No, anything that is given to the *āśrama* is meant for the Ṭhākura. If we eat it without giving it to the Ṭhākura, we are thieves.

Lalitā: But if someone gives something for you specifically, not for the Ṭhākura, then?

Bābāji: Then also it will be stealing. The world in which we live is Ṭhākura's. Anything given to anyone in this world is Ṭhākura's.

Lalitā: But the *śāstras* say that the guru and the

Ṭhākura are one: '*na guroradhikam tatvam na guroradhikam tapah*'. Then what harm if we offer something to the guru, without offering it to Ṭhākura?

Bābāji: *Tattva* (reality as it is) and *līlā* are different things. In *tattva* guru and Ṭhākura are one. But in *līlā* they are different. If you do not recognize this difference, then *bhoga* offered to Ṭhākura is offered to the guru. When Ṭhākura has eaten, the guru has eaten. There is no need of offering Ṭhākura's *prasāda* to the guru.

Then Lalitā Dāśī said weepingly, "Prabhu! I do not know what offense I commit against whom. You should all forgive me and bless me so that I may not commit any offense again."

On the third day Kunja Dādā, who had been cooking in the *āśrama* since Lalitā Dāśī fell ill, himself fell ill. Bābā Mahārāja asked Lalitā Dāśī to cook. Lalitā Dāśī began to cook. Everyone in the *āśrama* was surprised. They said to Bābā Mahārāja, "Lalitā is still too weak. She does not have *śakti* even to sit or move. How can she cook for fifty or sixty persons?"

Bābāji said, "*Śakti* is obtained neither as a fruit from the tree, nor does it drop like rain from the sky. *Śakti* comes from *sevā* (service). When she engages herself in the service of Ṭhākura, Ṭhākura will give her *śakti* for the service."

This is exactly what happened. Lalitā Dāśī cooked. She did not feel any difficulty. The next day God knows what came into Babaji's mind, he arranged for Jagannāthaji's *bhoga* and *Vaiṣṇava-sevā*¹³ in the evening. *Khira* was made from 40 kilograms of milk and appropriate quantities of rice and sugar and a number of other items were

¹³ Feeding the Vaiṣṇavas.

prepared. Lalitā had to cook them all. About two hundred and fifty Vaiṣṇavas were invited. Lalitā Dāśī alone was asked to serve them. She made obeisance at the feet of Bābā Mahārāja and started serving. She served them without feeling any kind of weakness or fatigue. Everyone was surprised to see this. Some hailed it as due to the faith of Lalitā Dāśī, some as the result of the *kṛpā-śakti* of Bābā Mahārāja.

Bābā Mahārāja once tested Lalitā Sakhī's power of endurance. At that time while all his disciples and companions lived in his *āśrama* (Jhāṇapitā Maṭha), he, Navadvīpa Dāsa, Lalitā Dāśī, Rāsaranginī Dāśī and Kunjadāsa Bābājī lived in Rādhāramaṇa Kunja.

In Rādhāramaṇa Kunja Bābā Mahāśaya used to eat the *mahāprasāda* of Rādhāramaṇa, while the others took the *mahāprasāda* brought from Jhāṇapitā Maṭha by Kusuma Manjarī Dāśī.

One day *bhoga* of one kilo rice was offered to Rādhāramaṇa. The *mahāprasāda* was consumed by Bābā Mahāśaya and three or four other persons, who happened to arrive at that time. After they had eaten four other persons arrived. Bābā Mahāśaya asked Lalitā Dāśī to cook one kilo rice for them. Navadvīpa Dāsa went and brought two kilos of rice from the house of Kunja Bhan Roy as *bhikṣā*. Lalitā Dāśī cooked one kilo out of that and served it to those persons after *bhoga* was offered to Rādhāramaṇa. Just after they had finished eating some other devotees arrived. Bābā Mahāśaya again asked Lalitā Dāśī to cook for them. She cooked the remaining one kilo. At this time the *mahāprasāda* from Jhāṇapitā Maṭha also arrived. Bābā Mahāśaya asked Lalitā Dāśī to serve the rice cooked by her together with the *mahāprasāda* from Jhāṇapitā Maṭha to everyone. After everyone had

eaten Bābā Mahāśaya asked Kusuma Manjarī Dāśī and Rāsaranginī Dāśī to eat what remained. Both of them said, "Lalitā Dāśī has not eaten anything. She may also be asked to share." Bābā said, "Do not bother about her. You eat up everything." So they consumed the whole of ■

When they had eaten Bābā retired for rest. Just after that a man came from Jena Maṭha with some *cirvā*¹⁴ milk and sweets. Bābā noticed that from his room. He said to Lalitā Dāśī, "Do not offer these things to Rādhāramaṇa just now. Let him rest. Offer them when he wakes. Just now you keep them in my room."

Lalitā Dāśī understood that Bābā Mahāśaya had a new idea in mind. She smiled and kept everything in his room. At four o'clock those things were offered to Rādhāramaṇa. Bābā Mahāśaya took a bit of the *mahāprasāda* and distributed the rest amongst the devotees, avoiding only Lalitā Dāśī. Then he looked at her smilingly and said, "Oh! I forgot her. Doesn't matter, her purpose will be served by the particles that remain in the pots." Accordingly Lalitā Dāśī rubbed her finger in the pots, then put it in her mouth. Surprisingly that alone appeased her appetite and gave her complete satisfaction.

A little before dusk, as Bābā Mahāśaya was going out for *Jagannātha-darśana*, Bhuvana Sāhu's son Nitāi Dāsa came with *puri*,¹⁵ *kacori*,¹⁶ *mohana-bhoga*¹⁷ and some other *prasāda*. Bābā Mahāśaya broke away a piece

¹⁴ Rice wetted, parched and flattened.

¹⁵ A sort of bread fried in ghee.

¹⁶ A sort of bread made from flour and filled with pulses and fried in ghee.

¹⁷ A sort of pudding.

from a *puri* and—without eating it—asked Nitāi Dāsa to go and tell Lalitā Dāsī that it was my *mahāprasāda*. Nitāi Dāsa did accordingly. But Bābā Mahāśaya had already told Lalitā Dāsī that if she got any *prasāda* from anywhere, she must not consume it. At nine o'clock when he returned from the temple, he said to her, "Where is the *prasāda*?" Lalitā. Why? That was your *adharāmṛta*. So I ate it all.

Bābājī. But it was not my *adharāmṛta*..

Lalitā. You had yourself conveyed through Nitāi Dāsa that that was your *adharāmṛta*..

Bābājī. But that was a lie. I had told so in order to test you.

Lalitā. If that was a lie, what I have just said is also a lie. She brought the thal containing *puri*, *kacori* and *mohana-bhoga* and placed it before Bābā Mahāśaya.

Bābā Mahāśaya was surprised and pleased. He took a small part of the *prasāda* and asked Lalitā Dāsī to take the rest.

In 1905 Bābājī Mahāśaya left the body to join *Nitya-līlā*¹⁸. Before leaving the body he had purchased a *bāganabāḍī* (house with a garden), in which he had installed the Śrī Vighraha of Rādhākānta. His *samādhi* exists there. It was therefore called *Samājabāḍī* after the disappearance of Bābā Mahārāja. Lalitā Dāsī began to live in *Samājabāḍī* and do the *sevā* of Śrī Rādhākānta. She began the *sevā* of Rādhākānta according to *Aṣṭakālīn-līlā*, which continues even now.

Since the arrival of Lalitā Dāsī Navadvīpa began to pulsate with new life, new current of *Bhakti-bhāva*

¹⁸ The eternal *līlā* of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

that emanated from her. Her fame as a *Siddha-mahātmā* spread far and wide. The people of Navadvīpa called her 'Sakhī Mā'. Many people heard about her extraordinary learning, deep knowledge of the *śāstras*, and capacity to solve all kinds of problems relating to spiritual life and came to her for guidance. Many came out of curiosity to see how a *pandita* of her stature lived in the guise of a woman. They were all sold out to her on account of her powerful personality, *Bhakti-bhāva*, and sweet and loving behaviour.

But once came to Navadvīpa Svāmī Viśvānanda, a very influential, self-conceited and fearsome sort of person. He had by his influence dethroned the Mahanta of Tarakesvara, because he lived luxuriously, which was against the ideal of a Mahanta. He heard that the Mahanta of *Samājabāḍī* was a *mahātmā*, who lived in the guise of a woman and became wild with rage. He went to *Samājabāḍī* with five or six of his followers. At that time Lalitā Dāsī was doing *bhajana* at the roof of her *kuṭi*. Viśvānanda climbed the roof with his men. Lalitā Dāsī made obeisance to him. But Viśvānanda said in anger, "Why do you live in this guise to seduce women? You will not be able to cheat anymore. Don't you know I am Viśvānanda? Throw away your *lehngā*, blouse and everything and put on the dress of a *sādhū*."

Lalitā Dāsī did not say anything. She stood with her head cast downwards, saying, 'Jai gurur! Jai gurur!'

Viśvānanda stepped forward and shouted in anger, "Don't you hear? Take off these clothes or I shall pull them out." Lalitā Dāsī stepped backwards and kept saying, 'Jai gurur! Jai gurur!'

The news had already spread in Navadvīpa that Viśvānanda would try to strip Lalitā Dāsī naked and

dishonour her. The people of Navadvīpa could never tolerate this. They were wild with anger. Hazārī Bābū, the inspector in charge of the police station in Navadvīpa also came to know about this. He rushed to *Samājabādī* with 8 of 10 policemen.

In *Samājabādī*, as Viśvānanda was advancing towards Lalitā Dāsī she was shrinking backwards. She was now standing on the edge of the roof with determination to commit suicide by jumping down if he touched her and thus to protect her honour and *bhāva*. Just then Viśvānanda heard the sound of the boots of the policemen climbing the stairs of the roof and began to tremble with fear. Hazārī Bābū rushed up to him. He held a revolver in one hand and caught hold of Viśvānanda with the other and said, "You have come to dishonour Sakhī Mā. What courage!" Turning to his men he said, "Take him to the police station." The policemen took him down the stairs.

Lalitā Dāsī also came down. She called Hazārī Bābū and said, "Hazārī Dādā! If you have any regard for me please set him free, because he is our guest. It is our duty to honour the guest."

Lalitā Dāsī took Viśvānanda to the verandah of her *kutī* and insisted on his taking some refreshments. He took refreshments while Lalitā Dāsī sat by his side fanning him. In the meantime hundreds of people had gathered with *lāthis* (staves) in their hands and were waiting for Viśvānanda to come out. They were surprised to see Sakhī Mā entertaining and serving him. They began to say to one another, "The villain is enjoying *sandeśa*"¹⁹ and

*resagullās*²⁰ and taking service from Sakhī Mā! Let him come out. Then we shall serve him to our hearts content. He had come to strip Sakhī Mā of her dress, we shall strip him of his skin."

Seeing that the people of Navadvīpa had gone wild in anger, Lalitā Dāsī said to Hazārī Bābū prayerfully, "Hazārī Dādā! You have to do me one more favour. Let your men take Viśvānanda to the railway station and see him off, otherwise I do not know what *Navadvīpavāsīs* will do to him." Hazārī Bābū obeyed. Viśvānanda breathed a sigh of relief.

Everyone appreciated the tolerance of Lalitā Sakhī. But the people of Navadvīpa felt disappointed, because they could not serve the distinguished guest as they wanted.

Lalitā Dāsī used to deliver discourses in the evening relating to the *Madhura-līlā* of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. While doing so she used to be so transported that it appeared as if she was experiencing the *līlā* directly. Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa themselves felt so much attracted by her discourses that they came regularly to listen to them without becoming visible to the other listeners. But one day their presence at that time became known by their footprints, which they had left. That day while Lalitā Dāsī was delivering the discourse in the verandah before her *kutī*, she had to go into the *kutī* for a while on account of some work. When she came out she saw two small footprints on an *āsana*, with black cover, which she used to spread for Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa to sit during discourse. Everyone was surprised to see the prints. For a long

¹⁹ Bengali sweets.

²⁰ Bengali sweets.

time people used to come to see the prints. To keep them secure Lalitā Dāsī cut the upper portion of the cover and put it inside a glass frame. But slowly the prints disappeared, only the frame remained.

Lalitā Dāsī used to celebrate the *Jhūlana*, *Rāsa* and *Holi Līlās* with great éclat and *bhāva*. At that time she used to sing songs composed by herself with such *bhāva* that the audience felt transported into the celestial land of *līlā* itself. She published '*Śrī Surat-Kathāmṛta*' and '*Sangīta Mādhava*' along with her Bengali translation and commentary. She is also the writer of '*Carita Sudhā*', the biography of Śrī Rādhāramaṇa Carāṇa Dāsa Deva in six volumes in Bengali, though her name as the author does not appear on the book.

She passed away to join the *līlā* of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in 1946.

CHAPTER XV

ŚRĪ RĀMADĀSA BĀBĀJĪ

(Faridpur/Calcutta)

Rāmadāsa Bābājī was born in 1875 in village Nilatuni of District Faridpur in East Bengal. His father Durgācarāṇa Bābū was an excise inspector. He was called 'Rādhikā Ranjana' by his parents.

Even in his childhood Rādhikā Ranjana manifested the qualities of a *mahāpuruṣa*. He could not tolerate the sight of suffering even in animals. Once he became unconscious to see a goat being sacrificed before goddess Kali. In that state he cried, "Mā! Do not carry him away. He is weeping." He could not see the birds inside a cage. He went to the houses of the neighbours having birds in cages and quietly released them. There was no end to his joy, when he saw them flying freely. He was a born singer. He had a sweet voice and wonderful memory. After seeing a dramatic performance he could surprise people by repeating all its songs in exactly the same tone in which they were sung. He was specially fond of *Nāma-kīrtana*. *Nāma-kīrtana* was his play as well as tonic. He could hardly live without it. He collected the boys of his age, usually of a low class and performed *kīrtana* with them. His parents scolded him for this, but without any effect. They thought that the environment of the village was harmful to him and that he might improve if he was sent to the city. So they sent him to Faridpur and

got him admitted into the famous Bangahitaṣi School of Fandpur

The environment of Fandpur proved even more congenial to him. Here he found friends like Sudhanvā Mitra and Bakulā Viśvāsa, who were equally interested in *kīrtana* and grew like him to be great saints.

During those days the so-called Vaiṣṇavas of the Bāul Sampradāya were prominent in Bengal. They went begging from door to door, sung in an attractive manner and fulfilled their nefarious designs by means of *mantras* and *tāntric* activities. When a Bāul came and sang at Rādhikā's door, he used to get so much absorbed in the song that he followed him for some distance. Once a Bāul hypnotized him and took him to his *akhāḍā*¹. In the state of hypnosis he could not know where he was going and why. Next morning, when he came to his own, he was scared to see a number of beggars, both men and women, around him and their mysterious activities. He began to weep. The chief of the Bāuls understood that Rādhikā belonged to a respectable family and the police, who might already be going about in search of him, might make a raid on them. He, therefore, asked the man, who had brought him, to go and leave him somewhere away from his home. The man again hypnotized him and left him at a place far away from his house. When he regained consciousness he saw his parents and other relatives sitting round him in deep anxiety.

No one said anything to Rādhikā at that time. But Durgācaraṇa Bābū became anxious about his future.

¹ *Āśrama*

He apprehended that his passion for *Harināma* might lead to disaster. His brother-in-law Śrī Bharatacandra Sen used to say, "If you send Rādhikā to live with me in Nilokhī, I would soon drive away the ghost of *Harināma* that has taken possession of him." So he sent Rādhikā with him to Nilokhī.

In Nilokhī Rādhikā could not chant *Harināma* or sing as long as his maternal uncle was at home. He sang when he was out or satisfied his craving for *kīrtana* by going to some solitary place and singing or by participating in the *samkīrtana* of *sādhus* in some *āśrama*. But this could not go on for long. Sen Mahāśaya came to know about this. He stopped Rādhikā's going out of house and gave him so much home task that he hardly found any time to sing. He asked him every day to commit to memory certain *sūtras* of Sanskrit grammar and repeat them in his presence in the evening. Poor Rādhikā spent all his time memorizing the *sūtras*. The waves of *Harināma* sometimes rose in his mind. He suppressed them. But sometimes in spite of him, the waves of *bhāva*, bursting forth like a tide, swept him away into the deep sea and compelled him to sing unmindful of the consequence.

On one such occasion, while memorising the *sūtras*, he began to sing with great emotion a song, of which the plaint was that he lived in a heartless world and there was none to whom he could open his heart and feel relieved. As he was singing his uncle was about to enter the house. He stood at the door to hear what he was singing. The tone of the song expressed the pain of Rādhikā's heart and an attitude of indifference towards one, who did not want that he should sing. This was too much for Sen Mahāśaya to bear. He rushed in, looked at Rādhikā

like a hawk looking for its prey, bound him to a Kadamba tree in his courtyard and began to lash him right and left with a stick. Rādhikā's aunt somehow rescued him from the hands of his brutish uncle. But from that day Sen Mahāśaya pledged like Hiranyakaśipu to not Rādhikā of his habit of singing *Harināma*. He sometimes kept him bound to the tree for all day, sometimes did not give him food to eat for a number of days, and sometimes, in winter, made him stand in cold water for hours. Rādhikā suffered it all patiently like Prahāda, but did not give up *Harināma*.

Ultimately Rādhikā's endurance, his faith in *Harināma* and the passionate and painful tone of his *kirtanas* touched the heart of Sen Mahāśaya. His attitude began to change. On one occasion Rādhikā had to go to Faridpur, from where he did not return. He was again admitted into the Bangahitai School.

Rādhikā was eight years old, when he met Jagadbandhu Prabhu. Jagadbandhu was at that time thirteen years old, but he had already become famous as an extraordinarily great *mahāpuruṣa*. Rādhikā surrendered himself completely to him and began to do *sādhana-bhajana* under his guidance. His studies also continued. In the *chātra-vṛtti* examination he passed in first division. He was then admitted into a *toḷa*² for studying Mugdhabodha Vyākaraṇa.

But he could not live for a second without Bandhu. Bandhu also could not live without him. Rādhikā instead of going to the *toḷa* went to Bandhu's house in Brahmanakāndā at the time the *toḷa* opened and remained

² A Sanskrit school.

with him till the time it was closed. He spent all the time in *kirtana* and talks about Kṛṣṇa with him.

A special feature of Bandhu's personality was that he became overwhelmed with *bhāva* as soon as he heard the name of Rādhā. Therefore instead of calling Rādhikā as Rādhikā, he called him 'Sārikā'.³ Once he said to him, "Sārikā! Look, every morning after bath you take a *chatāka*⁴ juice of the leaves of Parabala and one *toḷā* cow-dung." Rādhikā started taking them.

In 1891, when Rādhikā was 15 years old, an important episode took place. The Buno and Sāuntāl tribes of Fardpur district had been neglected and ill treated by Hindus for a long time inspite of the fact they were Hindus. The Christian missionaries took advantage of this. Mr Mid, a Christian priest tried to convert them into Christianity. With the help of Mr Herbert, the district magistrate, he fixed a date for their baptism. No one had the courage to stand up against the British government and prevent this. But Jagadbandhu and Rādhikā could not tolerate it. They determined to set at naught all efforts of Mr Mid and Mr Herbert in this connection. On the day on which baptism was to be done, a huge crowd gathered before the house of Jagadbandhu at his call with *mrdangas*, *karatālas*, conch-shells, bells and flags, etc. to wage a *samkirtana*-war against the Christians. The *samkirtana*-army, divided into seven groups, marched performing *samkirtana* through the city to the locality where the Bunoes and the Sāuntāls lived. As the army marched, the number of soldiers increased. The teachers

³ *Sārikā* means a small female bird of the parrot species, which has a sweet voice.

⁴ One sixteenth of a seer.

and the students, who were going to school, the men and women who had come out of their homes to make purchases in the market and the shop-keepers, who were going to open their shops, forgot everything and joined the army. The sound of sixteen *mrdangas* and a large number of *karatālas* mixed with the 'Haribol' sound of innumerable throats rent the sky. The main singer in *kirtana* was Rādhikā. Tears, tremor and the other *sātvika-bhāvas* adorned his body as he went singing and dancing. Others were also overwhelmed with *bhāva* and were singing and dancing with him. Jagadbandhu was always with him. When he noticed that he was so overwhelmed with *bhāva* that he ran the risk of becoming unconscious and falling down, he followed him closely with both of his hands spread out to protect him. As soon as the *samkirtana* procession reached the locality of the Bunoos, they were surprised beyond limit to hear the sky-rending sound of *samkirtana*. They were automatically drawn to it just as iron is automatically drawn by magnet and began to sing and dance with others.

Jagadbandhu heartily embraced their leader Rajanipāśā. His other companions embraced the other Bunoos. Rajanipāśā was so overwhelmed with *bhāva* on account of the loving embrace of Jagadbandhu that he fell unconscious on the ground. When he regained consciousness, he found that he was completely sold out to him. All his companions had a similar feeling. They had begun to curse themselves for entertaining the thought of conversion into Christianity. The fire of penitence blazed in their hearts. The Christian missionaries were watching the scene with dismay and disappointment.

After this episode Jagadbandhu and Rādhikā became

famous as the two spiritual dignitaries of Faridpur. But in the house of Rādhikā it caused an unprecedented upheaval. His people began to think that he had gone completely out of their hands and had started dancing openly on the streets with Jagadbandhu. He must be sent somewhere outside Faridpur so that he was deprived of the company of Jagadbandhu. So they sent him to Barisāl to live with his elder brother Vierśvara Bābū and study Sanskrit in a *toḷa*.

Separation from Jagadbandhu told heavily upon the mind and body of Rādhikā. He remained always sullen and gloomy and did not talk to anyone. No one ever saw him smiling. His appetite also seemed to have gone for ever. He told his brother that the climate of Barisāl did not suit him. So he was sent back to Faridpur. In Faridpur he was admitted into a *toḷa* in Brahmanakānda, near the house of Jagadbandhu. Rādhikā breathed a new life again.

At this time the environment of Rādhikā's house was comparatively favourable to him. His father had gone to Vārāṇasī and the brothers, who lived in Faridpur, did not keep a strict watch on him. Jagadbandhu had now decided to start his expedition of preaching the holy Name. He said to Rādhikā one day, "Sāṅkī! Let us go to Pābanā. There are great saints over there."

Rādhikā could easily obtain permission from his mother to go to Pābanā for a fortnight. On the way Jagadbandhu told him about the real purpose of his visit to Pābanā. In Pābanā they stayed with Dinabandhu Dāsa Bābāji for whom Jagadbandhu had great respect and had the *darśana* of Hārāṇa Kṣepā, whom he called the incarnation of Śrī Advaitācārya, a close associate of Śrī Caitanya. But from the next day they performed

*Trisandhya kirtana*⁵ at the *āśrama* of Dinabandhu Bābā and went out for *nagara-kirtana* a little before the schools and colleges closed. Their sweet *kirtana* and transcendental *bhāva* attracted the students, who instead of going home joined them in singing and dancing. Every day when they came out of the school or college they asked each other, "Which way will the *kirtana* party go today?" They went to the same side and waited for their arrival. When they arrived, they joined them and singing and dancing with them, created a scene such as the city had never seen before. This became a source of anxiety to their guardians. They wondered what could be the purpose of these two boys of Faridpur in launching this kind of expedition. They were neither beggars nor *sādhus*. They came of respectable families and did not ask anyone for anything. They did not also invite any one to their *kirtana*. Their sons and nephews were automatically drawn to them. They forgot all about their study and other things and sang and danced with them on the streets till late at night. The guardians conferred together and decided that they must do something to stop it.

Śrī Ranajit Sinha Lāhīḍī and Praśanna Kumāra Lāhīḍī the two famous advocates of Pābanā were the relatives of Jagadbandhu. The guardians complained to them about the conduct of Jagadbandhu and requested them to ask him to stop *nagara-kirtana*. They called Jagadbandhu and said "Look Bandhu, you must not perform *kirtana* on the streets from tomorrow. Perform at our place or the *āśrama* of Dinabandhu Bābāji. But as soon as Bandhu returned to the *āśrama* he said

⁵ *Kirtana* performed three times during the day.

to Rādhikā, "Sārikā! Come, let us go for *nagara-kirtana*." He went out with *mṛdaṅga* and asked Rādhikā to sing:
āvāra bole harināma, āvāra bole /
 —O chant *Harināma!* Chant and chant again."

Singing and dancing they went near the schools and colleges. They seemed to be even more inspired than on other days. There was a maddening attraction in the sound of Bandhu's *mṛdaṅga* and Rādhikā's voice. The students were seen running to them. They were vying with one another to reach so near them that they might sing and dance while looking at them.

Rādhikā was singing that single line: *āvāra bole harināma, āvāra bole*. Tears were incessantly streaming out of his eyes. From time to time the waves of *bhāva*, playing in his heart, burst out in the form of a passionate cry that rent the sky. His *bhāva* was touching the hearts of people and making them also shed tears as they sang and danced with him. The *kirtana* procession was thus passing from one street to another. No one knew when and where it would end. No one cared to know either. It was at ten o'clock at night that the *kirtana* stopped at one end of the city.

Seeing that the advice and the scolding of the Lāhīḍī brothers had also had no effect upon Bandhu and Rādhikā, some wicked people had already hatched a plan to punish them. As they were passing through a lonely place while returning to the *āśrama* of Dinabandhu Dāsa Bābā after *nagara-kirtana*, two villains, who were hiding behind a tree, came out and began to beat them with *lāthis*. They tried to protect each other from their blows by taking all the blows upon themselves. After beating the villains pushed them down into a nullah and ran away.

They came out of the nullah with each other's support and sat on the road, waiting for some carriage, because they were unable to walk. When the carriage came they got into it. As they were going in the carriage Bandhu said to Rādhikā smilingly, "Sārikā! What do you think? Is not our mission making headway? Whenever obstacles come in the way of some work done selflessly, it should be thought that the work is advancing."

Rādhikā and Bandhu returned to Faridpur. Soon after they went to Navadvīpa and stayed in Harisabha.

Jagadbandhu was by now well known all over Bengal. When the people of Navadvīpa and surrounding areas came to know that he had come to Navadvīpa, they began to come to Navadvīpa for his *darśana*. Some of the dignitaries who came were Premānanda Bhāratī,⁸ Atula Campab, Vrajabālā and Jai Nītā. They were all like the brightest luminaries that had at that time arisen on the spiritual firmament of India. They were staying in Harisabha. The arrival of Śrī Vijaya Kṛṣṇa Gosvāmī was awaited. Apart from their desire for the *darśana* of Jagadbandhu Prabhu, their visit was not to a small extent motivated by the desire to hear the heart-melting *kirtanas* of Rādhikā, about which they had heard so much.

The next day early in the morning they started for *nagara-kirtana* with Rādhikā. Rādhikā's sweet voice and the deep emotional tone of his *kirtanas* attracted the people of Navadvīpa. They began to join the *kirtana* in numbers. By the time the *kirtana* party returned their number was so large that they could not all be

accommodated in the spacious hall of Harisabha. While Rādhikā was still performing *kirtana* in the hall, the people suddenly shouted "He has come! He has come!" Rādhikā raised his head and saw a *mahātmā* with gigantic body, matted hair, radiant face and red eyes coming towards him. He understood that he must be Vijaya Kṛṣṇa Gosvāmī. Vijaya Kṛṣṇa Gosvāmī fixed his gaze at him for sometime. Then suddenly, with an inarticulate cry of love he rushed forward and embraced him. Rādhikā was entranced by his touch. He lay down and began to roll at his feet. Vijaya Kṛṣṇa embraced him again and blessed him repeatedly by caressing him.

In the evening Bandhu went out with Rādhikā for *darśana* in the temples. On the way they saw a man and a woman, sitting somewhere and raving like mad persons. Bandhu asked Rādhikā, "You know who they are?"

Rādhikā said, "A mad man and mad woman."

Bandhu laughed. Rādhikā could not understand the meaning of the laughter. At night while going to rest Bandhu whispered something into his ear and slept. Rādhikā went out quickly at dead of night, when complete darkness and silence prevailed everywhere. He reached Poḍāmātalā, in front of the temple of Yogamāyā, the goddess, who contrives the *līlā* of Gaura-Govinda. He saw that the door of the temple was open and there sat inside the temple the very same persons, whom he had thought to be mad, sitting like two clusters of light and lightening the surroundings by their cool and comforting radiation. Rādhikā was charmed and stupefied and fell senseless on the ground. On regaining consciousness he found himself in Harisabha, he did not know how.

⁸ The saint who went to America for preaching at the behest of Rādhārāmanya Carāṇa Dāsa Deva.

After enjoying the company of saints and doing *darsana* of the deities and *samkirtana* in Navadvīpa for fifteen days Rādhikā returned to Faridpur with Bandhu. Before leaving he asked for leave from Padaratna Mahāśaya to return and said, "Kindly bless me so that I am freed from bondage to serve Mahāprabhu all the time with my body, mind and soul." Padaratna Mahāśaya said, looking towards Mahāprabhu. "Prabhu! Bless this child and take care of him."

When Rādhikā reached home, he saw that his uncle and aunt had come from Nilokhī at the invitation of his mother. He understood why they were called. Sen Mahāśaya was now meeting Rādhikā after four years. He found that he was grave and there was a divine lustre on his face. He could with difficulty pick up the courage to speak to him. After admiring his devotion and talking to him on some religious topics he said, "I have heard that you are going to renounce the world and become a *sannyāsi*."

Rādhikā said, "Māmāji! Can anyone renounce the world of his own? And if Kṛṣṇa attracts can anyone remain in the world? On the full-moon day when the sea swells, it sweeps away the straw on the bank. Does the straw leave the bank on its own?"

Sen Mahāśaya was stunned. He could not say anything further. Rādhikā's mother, who was listening to the conversation from a distance, said to her brother on finding him alone, "So you have heard. He never gives out his mind. He has become a problem. He does not talk with anyone, does not sit with anyone, always keeps alone. Neither he eats nor drinks, nor reads or writes, nor does anything else. He always counts beads. I do not know what he thinks or sees, on account

of which he sometimes becomes unconscious. Even while asleep he sometimes prays and sometimes shouts, 'Ha Gaurā! Ha Nītāi!' and weeps.

One day Rādhikā went to Jagadbandhu's house early in the morning, when he was lying on the bed with his body covered by a sheet of cloth from head to feet. As soon as he entered Bandhu said, "Who? Rāmi? Come." Rādhikā thought he meant some one else. Bandhu said, "I mean you." While still lying he made Rādhikā sit by his side and said, "Look, yesterday I had gone to Pābanā. Dinabandhu Dāsa Bābā said, 'You have not brought Rāmadāsa? He said that your real name was Rāmadāsa.' When I went to Hārāna he also said the same. So from today your name is Rāmadāsa. This is the name given by a *Siddha-mahāpuruṣa*." Then he picked up a phial of scent lying by his side and applied it to his chest, saying, "Look, I have done your *abhiṣeka*⁷ with Rādhārānī's scent." Rādhikā felt that he was being seated on the high seat of a different plane and the *abhiṣeka* and the new name meant a new life of renunciation for him.

One day Sudhanvā and Bakul came and gave him a letter from Bandhu, which said:

"Dear Rāmadāsa! I am sending ten rupees. Go to Navadvīpa as soon as convenient. Stay in Harisabhā. On meeting Śrīkānta Caudhari there you will come to know about what you have to do next."

The same day at night Rāmadāsa got up from his bed, made obeisance to his sleeping mother and mentally prayed for permission to leave for ever. He came out of home, tore his *dhoti* into two pieces, wore

⁷ Bath.

one as *bahirvāsa*⁸ and the other as *cāḍara*⁹ and started for Navadvīpa with a bundle of books on his shoulder and a bag of beads for counting *Harināma* in his hand.

On reaching Navadvīpa Rāmadāsa met Jagadbandhu's devotee Śrīkānta Caudhari who, according to the arrangement already made by Jagadbandhu, made him board a train with a ticket for Hātharas station. In Hātharas he stayed at the house of Sen Atala Bihārī Nandī another devotee of Jagadbandhu. Then he received another letter from Bandhu, in which he wrote:

"Dear Rāmadāsa! From Hātharas you go to Vṃdāvana alone. A renunciant goes alone wherever he goes. He does not depend upon anyone. He neither insists that others should follow his line or accept his point of view, nor opposes anyone. He always adopts the easiest path of truth. Bhagavān has infinite attributes out of which six are important. *Vairāgya* is the most important of all. You have the support and strength of *vairāgya*. Therefore always remain free and fearless. Live on *mādhukari*. First of all go to the old temple of Govinda Deva. What you have to do next you will come to know at appropriate time. At appropriate time you will meet me—Your Bandhu."

On receiving the letter Rāmadāsa started for Vṃdāvana by the first train. In the train he met an old woman, who took him to the old temple of Govinda Deva. On the right side of the temple is a room resembling the temple. She entered that room and said, "Come, this is my home." As soon as he entered the room he saw that the old lady had disappeared and on the

altar in the room sat goddess Yogamāyā in the form of a beautiful Śrī Mūrti. He cried out 'Mā! Mā!' and fell unconscious. When he regained consciousness the Mahanta of the temple asked him to stay in a room of the temple. He thought that that was also due to the mercy of Yogamāyā.

The next day in the morning Rāmadāsa went for a bath in Yamunā. By chance he met Vrajabālā and Premānanda Bhārati. Premānanda Bhārati embraced and kissed him and said, "Kanhayā has granted my prayer. He has set you free and brought you to the place of His *līlā*. Now He will play with you and will be happy to hear your *kīrtanas*."

One day Rāmadāsa lay down under a Kadamba tree in Kālidāsa with his head supported by a root of the tree as pillow and fell asleep, just as a child would fall asleep in the lap of his mother while sucking at her breast. In a dream at the end of the night he saw a goddess, whose body was shedding light like a thousand moons, uttering a *mantra* in his ear. In the morning he went to the *kuṭī* of Vrajabālā and told him all about the dream. Vrajabālā was excited. He embraced Rāmadāsa and said, "Yogamāyā! Yogamāyā's mercy! By the mercy of Yogamāyā you have got the *mantrarāja* in a dream. Later you will get it from a *mahāpuruṣa*. Jagā¹⁰ did not give *mantra* to you. He does not give *mantra* to anyone. Do the *japa* of this *mantra*. You will realize the desired End." Rāmadāsa shivered to hear this. A few drops of tears trickled down his eyes.

Rāmadāsa Bābājī had already received the blessings of all the great *mahātmas* of his time. He now received

⁸ Outer garment for wearing below the waist.

⁹ Sheet of cloth for wearing in the upper part of the body.

¹⁰ Jagadbandhu.

the blessings of Yogamāyā After this what remained? What remained was the fulfilment of the blessings It was not long before the fulfilment came.

One day, while going about in different places in Vraja for the *darśana* of the spots, connected with the *līlā* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, he reached Rādhākūṇḍa He was sitting at the bridge over the confluence of Rādhākūṇḍa and Śyāmākūṇḍa when he saw two young *gopis* standing on the bank of Rādhākūṇḍa and talking with each other The beauty of their faces, beaming with transcendental light, stole his heart As he looked at them, the conceit of his being a male was transformed into the conceit of a *manjarī*, a *sakhī* in the service of Rādhā Suddenly they disappeared Slowly the sun was set and night approached When it became dark the same *gopis* came laughing They asked him to accompany them Like one spellbound and possessed by a transcendental *bhāva* Rāmadāsa Bābā followed them in his *manjarī* form After going some distance he saw a beautifully decorated swing hanging from the branch of a banyan tree, on which were seated Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and the same *gopis* were pushing the swing backward and forward, while he was enjoying the transcendental beauty of the twin divinities and singing Suddenly the whole scene disappeared but his *Rādhā-dāśī* (*manjarī*) *bhāva* remained, which became permanent

After sometime Bandhu came to Vṛndāvana and took Rāmadāsa with him to Rādhākūṇḍa They stayed together in Rādhākūṇḍa for a month and enjoyed *kīrtana*, *smaraṇa* and the *darśana* in *smaraṇa* of different kinds of *līlā* of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa They returned to Vṛndāvana a day before Rāsapūrṇimā.

One day they were returning after a bath in Yamunā,

when a lady offered to Rāmadāsa rich *prasāda* of different kinds in good quantity After the lady had gone Bandhu put a small particle of the *prasāda* in his mouth and a small particle in the mouth of Rāmadāsa and then said to him, "Go, after making obeisance to Yamunā and to *prasāda* throw the *prasāda* into the river." Rāmadāsa obeyed, but he did not understand why Bandhu asked him to throw away *prasāda* into the river

Bandhu said, "Look, Śrī Mūrti and *prasāda* are non-different Śrī Mūrti remains unmanifest It manifests itself only to a pure devotee, gives *darśana* to him and talks to him Similarly *prasāda* does not manifest itself to everyone It manifests itself only in the house of a devotee Therefore one should take *prasāda* only at the house of a devotee *Prasāda* given by a non-devotee should be regarded as *Māyā* in the form of *prasāda*"

After a few days Bandhu decided to return to Bengal, leaving Rāmadāsa in Vṛndāvana When he told Rāmadāsa about it, he saw that his eyes had become wet His heart was already sore, because the person, for the sake of whose company he had renounced the world, had sent him away to live alone in Vṛndāvana He had expected that Bandhu would not further deprive him of his company Bandhu held both of his hands and said gravely, "Rāma! Live in Vṛndāvana You will be blest." Rāma said in a choked voice, "Very well" and a few drops of tears trickled down his eyes.

After Bandhu had gone Rāmadāsa began to live in Patanā Kunja, near the temple of Rādhāramāṇa He lived with intense *vairāgya* and passed all his time in *japa*, *līlā-smaraṇa* and in the company of the *sādhus*. For *prasāda* he had to go to Raghunandana Gosvāmī's

house. Raghunandana Gosvāmi had asked him in the presence of Jagadbandhu to take *prasāda* from his house every day. Bandhu had not objected to this out of respect for Raghunandana Gosvāmi. But he had already asked Rāmadāsa not to accept *sthūla-bhikṣā* ¹¹ from any one. It was incumbent upon Rāmadāsa to obey both Bandhu and Raghunandana Gosvāmi. Therefore he brought *prasāda* from Raghunandana Gosvāmi and gave it to an old *Vrajabāsi* lady, from whom he took two *rotis* made of *bājārā* or *jvārā*. The poor lady felt happy to receive from Rāmadāsa the rich fare consisting of *khīra*, *pūrī* and *sandēṣa*, etc. But Rāmadāsa Bābā felt happier to get from her the *mādhukarī* of the *roti* made from coarse grains.

Some time passed like this. Rāmadāsa was now 17 years old. An important change was to take place in his life. As a prelude to it he received a ten rupee money order from Bandhu. On the coupon of the money order was written: "Come to Calcutta from Hugli by steamer. Stay with Phatika Majūmadār of Kumāratali. —Your Bandhu."

When Rāmadāsa Bābā reached the house of Phatika Bābū, Bandhu was there. After sometime came Śrī Atul Campatī, a *mahātmā* looking like an *evadhūta*. He took him to a room and said, "You stay here. Bandhu will not meet anyone today." Bābā was stunned to hear this. He had come to Bandhu, his very life and soul, with a passionate desire to meet him after such a long time. He was expecting that Bandhu also must be restless to meet him and would clasp him within his arms as soon as he saw him. He had never imagined even in

¹¹ Whole meal.

dream that he would cold shoulder him like that. Why at all did he call him from Vṛndāvana, he thought. After calling why was he so indifferent to him? There must be some important and secret reason for this. What that reason could be he tried hard to guess, but could not.

A day before Rāmadāsa came Bandhu had told his companions, "I am going to get a plant of *Harināma* from Vṛndāvana. The plant is from a good seed. Sometime ago I had left it there to grow in the climate of Vṛndāvana. It has now become all-proof. Laden heavily with fruits it is about to come here soon." He apprehended that the parrots of Vṛndāvana might eat up its fruits and the thousands of hungry people of the world might remain hungry without them. He was anxious to leave Rāmadāsa in the world as a moving *Kalpavṛkṣa* (desire-tree) to move about freely for the benefit of all. But the task was not so easy. The main obstacle in it was the love of Rāmadāsa for him and his earnest desire to live with him. It was to remove this obstacle that he had planned a device of which this was the beginning.

Even more important than this there was another reason why Bandhu wanted to keep Rāmadāsa apart. All the devotees of Bandhu regarded him as Bhagavān. Rāmadāsa alone regarded him as his Dādā or elder brother. The relationship he had established with him was the relationship of pure love—simple, unaffected, natural and unrestrained love. There was no scope in it for fear, formality or regard for any kind of *aśvarya* or position that compels an attitude of worship, just as there was no scope for such things in the attitude of the *gopīs* towards Kṛṣṇa. The *gopīs* refused to recognize Kṛṣṇa as Bhagavān even though they saw infinite *aśvarya* in Him. It was not possible for Bandhu to keep together

the devotees having contrary attitude towards him.

Rāmadāsa had a delayed meeting with Bandhu. But a smile from Bandhu made him forget everything. They started talking of *līlā* and performing *kīrtana* as usual. As desired by Bandhu Rāmadāsa performed *nagara-kīrtana* during the day and spent the nights in talking about the *līlā* of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa with Bandhu and performing *līlā-kīrtana* with him.¹²

After a couple of months Bandhu hired the house No. 64-1 in Cāṣā-dhōpā-pādā lane and started living there. The house was situated near Domapādā, Rambāgān and the locality in which the prostitutes lived. In these places, theft and dacoity and murder were the order of the day. Bandhu chose to live here, because his mission of reforming the fallen and setting them on the path of Bhakti could be fulfilled more easily, if he lived among them. Here he asked Campatī and his other devotees to go together round the city performing *kīrtana* and he asked Rāmadāsa to bathe daily in the Ganges and then go about alone performing *kīrtana* in Domapādā, Rambāgān and the other places in that area. *Kīrtana* is more enjoyable when performed by a number of people singing together. The gracious Lord sent four other devotees, who were impressed by the *kīrtanas* of Rāmadāsa and had surrendered themselves to him. They were Tulasi, Kṣīroda and Rānu. The fourth was a black, lean and thin dog, who used to come for *kīrtana* before others. Rāmadāsa saw him for the first time one day just as he opened the door to go to the Ganges for bath. It appeared to him that there sat at the door an old Vaiṣṇava, who wore *kañthī* and

¹² *Kīrtana* relating to some particular *līlā* of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

tilaka. He made obeisance to him. After making obeisance as soon as he got up, he saw that it was not a man but a dog, who sat there. The dog came to him every day, before he went for bath to the Ganges and went away, somewhere after his return. During the *kīrtana*, from time to time he made an inarticulate sound to match the 'Haribol' sound of *kīrtana*.

Rāmadāsa did not like that Bandhu should separate him from the other devotees. He saw that the attitude of the other devotees, particularly the attitude of Campatī towards him was becoming more and more unfriendly. In that environment he felt very much suffocated. He began to think of going back to Vṛndāvana. Therefore Bandhu said, "Look, it is natural for you to yearn for Vṛndāvana. But the man who eats after feeding others, is alone a man in the true sense."

One day Rāmadāsa was doing *smaraṇa* at night. Bandhu beckoned him to come to his room for *līlā-kīrtana* by playing softly on *mṛdaṅga*. He went and started *līlā-kīrtana*. Rāmadāsa Bābā was singing. Bandhu was playing on *mṛdaṅga*. While singing Bābā saw in a trance Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa dancing together in *mahārāsa*. After *mahārāsa* Rādhā lay fatigued in the lap of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa, like the black bee, began to kiss the lotus-like lips of Rādhā. He got so intoxicated with the nectar of *mahābhāva* on Her lips that he fell into stupor and became numb and inert like a statue. As Kṛṣṇa was kissing Rādhā's lips She also got intoxicated and fell asleep. On seeing the golden image of Rādhā lying in the lap of the blue image of Kṛṣṇa, Bābā began to sing:

'sakhī torā dhire-dhire kathā ka na /
rāi jena jāge na // etc.

—O Sakhī! Talk low. Disturb not Rādhā in Her

sleep (in the lap of Kṛṣṇa)."

Rāmadāsa was singing and enjoying the transcendental beauty of the divine couple in that state. Slowly he lost outward consciousness. Bandhu also had a similar experience and became unconscious. At dawn Bandhu regained consciousness. He began to sing a song relating to the awakening of the couple. The song revived the outward consciousness of Rāmadāsa. Bandhu gave him the notebook containing songs relating to *Kuṇya-bhaṅga* *līlā* 13 and asked him to sing.

Rāmadāsa, in a fit of excitement, threw the notebook on the face of Bandhu. His eyes became red with rage, because he had deprived him of the enjoyment of the *rasa* he was relishing while outwardly unconscious.

Bandhu laughed and said, "Who is hurt? Look out of the window." He meant that the time had come for the morning stroll with *Nāma-kīrtana*. If for the sake of his enjoyment Rāmadāsa ignored *Nāma-kīrtana* he would commit an offense and hurt Kṛṣṇa, because *Nāma* and *Nāmi*, that is the name 'Kṛṣṇa' and Kṛṣṇa, the person, were one. Rāmadāsa understood and lowered his head with shame.

Bandhu had told Rāmadāsa on a previous occasion that only he was a man in the real sense, who did not eat without feeding others. By letting him know that the service of the Name was superior to *smarana*, Rāmadāsa thought, he had suggested that his future life should be devoted to the service of humanity through *Nāma-kīrtana*, rather than to *līlā-smarana*.

The next day Bandhu suddenly left for Vṛndāvana.

12 Kīrtana relating to some particular *līlā* of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

13 The end of the amorous *līlā* in the *kuṇya* at night.

leaving Rāmadāsa to brood over the difficult situation he was now facing. Bandhu was so merciful towards him, yet so indifferent. He had so far occupied the highest place in his heart. But he was now withdrawing himself from it. The vacuum thus created by him was gnawing at his heart. He did not see anyone, who could fill it. There was also no one to whom he could open his heart, except the Yogamāyā Mā Kālī of Calcutta. He went to her and told his tale. Mā heard. Her response was quick and sympathetic.

The next morning, when he went out for *nagara-kīrtana*, he had only the dog as his companion. He had crossed Citapur and was going along the footpath of the company garden performing *kīrtana*. Suddenly he heard the dog's *bho-bho* cry from behind. His cry was always meaningful. Therefore he looked back. He saw him standing before a house, wagging his tail and looking towards the gate.

This aroused his curiosity. He stepped back and looked towards the gate. He saw that the door of Sāhā Babu's drawing room was open. On a cushion on the right side of the room sat a gigantic *mahātmā* with a divine lustre on his face, whose ears seemed to be set on the sound of *kīrtana*. As Bābā looked at him for a while, he also looked at him. It is difficult to say that in this exchange of glances, who influenced whom and how much. Bābā thought of going in and making obeisance to him. But the next moment he got up and went into another room, casting one more glance at him as he went.

The next morning again he went and stood before the house of Sāhā Bābū, doing *kīrtana*. A servant came out and said, "Perhaps you want to meet the Barhā

Bābājī of Purī. He left yesterday evening."

While in Vṛndāvana Rāmadāsa had met so many saints but none except Bandhu had attracted him so much as Barhā Bābā. He began to hanker restlessly after his *darśana*

By now Bandhu had returned from Vṛndāvana. He was staying in Darjipāḍā with his devotees while Rāmadāsa lived in Cāṣā-dhopā-pāḍā. He sent word to Rāmadāsa. "Tomorrow we have to go to Navadvīpa. Meet at Ahiratalā Ghāta."

The next day, when he reached the Ghāta, Bandhu had gone to Navadvīpa with Campatī. His other devotees were to go by another boat. Rāmadāsa sat in that boat. But none of the other devotees talked with him.

When he reached the Harisabhā in Navadvīpa, where Bandhu was staying, he asked Campatī, "Where is Bandhu?" He replied in a grave tone, "Prabhu is living behind Harisabhā in a thatched cottage. Today no one can meet him."

Campatī thus pricked him in his heart, which was already sore, and went.

The rumour spread all over Navadvīpa that *Nava-Gaurāṅga* (New Gaurāṅga) had appeared in Navadvīpa and He had been kept in hiding. When Rāmadāsa came to know about this, he remembered that last time when he had come to Navadvīpa with Bandhu, census was going on and Bandhu had asked his people to hide him so that he might not be counted among men. Now when his divinity was openly talked about, he thought that perhaps he wanted for the fulfilment of some purpose, to so manifest himself. Therefore he should keep himself aloof from him, otherwise he would prove an obstacle

to him. As he thought of this his whole frame trembled and tears trickled down his eyes.

That day was the day of Mahāprabhu's appearance. Before the actual time of His appearance crowds of people were rushing towards the holy Gangā for a dip in the river. There was no one in Harisabhā. Rāmadāsa alone was sitting in a corner weeping. At that time Bandhu came quietly and said, "Rāmi! Why are you sitting here?" Rāmadāsa wept out more bitterly. He closed his eyes with both hands, because he could not look at him. Bandhu held his both hands and said, "Come, let us also go and have *darśana* from a distance."

Bandhu took Rāmadāsa with him and went through the back door of Harisabhā and lanes and by-lanes to the bank of Gangā and stood behind the broken wall of an old garden-house. They saw countless people bathing in the river, countless standing on the bank and countless sitting in the boats and heard the sky-rending sound of 'Haribol.' All of a sudden they saw a *kirtana*-party, going to the river and singing in a sweet tone:

*"Bhaje Nitāi-Gaura Rādhē-Śyāma
Japa Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Rāma"*

Bandhu whispered into the ear of Rāmadāsa, "The party of Barhā Bābājī Mahārāja of Purī!" He felt that Bandhu had brought him there only to ask him by gesture to take shelter under the feet of Barhā Bābājī Mahārāja.

That day Rāmadāsa did not have any other talk with Bandhu. At dead of night, after the crowd had dispersed, they bathed in the Gangā and returned to Harisabhā.

Rāmadāsa had to spend ten more days in Navadvīpa, sobbing and weeping in the company of Bandhu and yet in agonizing separation from him. He could not live

there in this condition anymore. He returned to Cāṣā-dhopā-pādā in Calcutta and began to do *nagara-kirtana* as instructed by Bandhu.

After seven days Bandhu came. He did not go to Daripādā, but came straight to Cāṣā-dhopā-pādā. A new ray of light and hope sparkled in the heart of Rāmadāsa. But it did not take long to disappear. He stayed there for twenty-four hours, but did not once call Rāmadāsa. At night Campatī said to him, "Rāma! Tomorrow morning at the time of *nagara-kirtana* sing the song of praise and prayer to Bandhu as Bhagavān. Bandhu is Bhagavān. We must behave towards Him accordingly."

It was not possible for Rāma to worship him as Bhagavān, whom he had loved all along as his *bandhu* (friend) or *dādā* (elder brother). To do so would have been to place him at a yawning distance from himself. How could the one, who was worshipped as Bhagavān be as close to one's heart as a friend or brother? So he thought it fit to go away from there. From a distance he could still be closer to Bandhu than in his company. But the events moved faster. Next morning, when Campatī saw him singing other *kirtana* songs rather than the songs of prayer to Bandhu as Bhagavān, he pounced upon him. He beat him and pushed him away saying, "Get away from here. You do not deserve to stay here even for a moment."

Thus chastised by Campatī and ignored by Bandhu, Rāmadāsa went to the house of his devotee Natavara Lal in Calcutta. He lived there and did *nagara-kirtana*, and *smarana*, etc. as enjoined before by Bandhu. Since the moment he was pushed by Campatī his attraction towards Bandhu had decreased and he felt attracted

more and more towards Barhā Bābā. He felt that there was in it the hand of some Unseen Power, working according to some design for his betterment and the benefit of the rest of mankind, of which his dissociation from Bandhu and surrender at the feet of Barhā Bābā was an essential part. He became restless to meet Barhā Bābājī Mahārāja and started his search for him.

He came to know that Barhā Bābā was in Navadvīpa at that time. The next day he went to Navadvīpa. In Hansabhā he happened to meet Navadvīpa Dāsa Bābā. Introducing himself to him, he asked where he could meet Barhā Bābā. Navadvīpa said, "He is my own Dādā. I shall take you to him." He also said, "We call him 'Dādā,' because he is by nature a Dādā for us all. His demeanour, habits and behaviour are like that of a *bandhu* or *dādā*. He is the affectionate *bandhu* (friend) of everyone."

Rāmadāsa was happy beyond measure to know this. He understood that he was going to get his *bandhu* in another form and what appeared to him to be separation from Bandhu was union with him in a sweeter form.

The next day Navadvīpa Dāsa took Rāmadāsa to the *āśrama* of Palagovinda, where Barhā Bābā was staying. As soon as Rāmadāsa saw Barhā Bābā, his whole body shivered with a wave of transcendental *bhāve* and happiness. He performed *daṇḍavat* before him. Navadvīpa, whispering into his ear, introduced Rāmadāsa to him and told him about his separation from Jagadbandhu. Barhā Bābā looked grave as he fixed his gaze upon him. But the very next moment there was a smile on his face. He stood up and clasped Rāmadāsa in his arms. Oh! How pleasant, how ecstasising was the clasp! Each was bathing the other with his tears, as if the elder brother had found his younger brother after a long

time and was pouring on him all the love stored in his heart through the embrace and the tears of his eyes. The younger brother was overwhelmed with joy on luckily finding his only elder brother, whom he had lost. Barhā Bābā sat down on the cot, holding Rāmadāsa close to his heart. After a while a wave of *bhāva* stirred his heart. He shouted 'Jai Nitāi!' and, placing his left hand on his back, said in a sweet voice, "Bhāi (brother) Rāma! Come, let us go!"

He stood up and began to go out of the *āśrama*. His companions followed with *kholā*¹⁴ and *karatālas*.¹⁵ At his gesture the *kholā* and *karatālas* began to sound. Rāmadāsa heard Barhā Bābā saying in a sweet tone, "Bhāi Rāma! Would you do some *Nāma-kīrtana*?" Rāma started singing in his sweet voice:

"*Harī bale re bhāi, gadādhara,
geurāṅga basu jñāhavā Nitāi..*" etc.

The sweet tone and the maddening *bhāva* of *kīrtana* ecstasised people. As the *kīrtana* party marched towards Hansabhā more and more people joined it. In a short time the procession became gigantic. Barhā Bābā Mahārāja was so overwhelmed with *bhāva* that he began to dance like a mad elephant and shout from time to time "Ha Nitāi! Ha Nitāi!" It became difficult for him to control his *bhāva*.

When the *kīrtana*-party reached before Mahāprabhu in Harisabhā Barhā Bābā gave a loving embrace to Rāmadāsa and said, "Bhāi Rāma! You made me so happy today. May Nitāi bless you with *prema* and you may bless others by distributing it." With this he surrendered him at the feet of Mahāprabhu. Rāmadāsa thought that

¹⁴ *Mrdanga*

¹⁵ *Cymbals*

Barhā Bābā Mahārāja had accepted him for ever. It became impossible for him to live without him. Whether asleep or awake, he always thought of him.

Rāmadāsa requested him to give him *dīkṣā-mānta*. He asked him first to obtain the permission of Jagadbandhu. Rāmadāsa went and asked for his permission. He readily permitted, because this was a part of his own plan regarding him. He had once told him, "Rāma! You have obtained from me *Vraja-rasa*. From another *mahāpuruṣa*, who is non-different from me, you will obtain *Gaura-rasa* and drown the world with it." But the sorrow he felt in bidding him farewell for ever was apparent from a letter, he later wrote to him in verse. The first two lines of the letter were:

"*kemane bidāya dibo cira dina tare.
kemane kahibo re, kemane sahibo re /
smarite dārūna kathā śarīra sihare.
kemana bidāya dibo cira dina tare. //*

—Oh! How to bid farewell for ever! How to bear it. How to express my grief in doing it. My body shivers as I think of it."

The great ones renounce everything for the good of the world. Jagadbandhu renounced his Rāmi, dearer to him than his own self, for the good of the world, for going around the world to preach *Harināma* under the guidance of Rādhāramāṇa Cāraṇa Dāsa Deva and delivering the *jīvas* of Kali from bondage.

Rādhāramāṇa made Rāmadāsa in every sense his own by giving him *dīkṣā*. Rāmadāsa also surrendered himself to him completely and established the same kind of loving relationship with him, absolutely free from any kind of hitch, hesitation or reservation, as he had with Jagadbandhu. This is evident from a particular episode.

Once Barhā Bābājī Mahāśaya was invited at the house of Śrī Mukunda Ghoṣa. Mukunda Ghoṣa and his wife had parental affection for Bābājī. The latter was angry because Bābā had not visited them for a long time. She had decided that on his arrival, she would express her indignation by not talking with him freely as usual. The omniscient Bābā came to know about this. As soon as he entered the house, he said painfully like a child in hunger, "Mā! I am very hungry. Give me something to eat." This aroused her motherly affection and she forgot everything else. Quickly she brought *rabari*, *sandeśa* and *prasāda* of various other kinds and placed them before Bābā and his companions. She also brought a *thāla* full of big Fajālī mangoes. With her own hand she put one mango into the mouth of Barhā Bābā Mahārāja. The mango was big. So one end of the mango remained outside his mouth. Suddenly Rāmadāsa was possessed by a current of *sakhyā-bhāva*. He rushed towards Bābā Mahārāja, held his neck with his left hand and clasped the other end of the mango with his mouth. A wave of *sakhyā-bhāva* also splashed the heart of Barhā Bābā and he made Rāmadāsa sit on his lap while he still grasped the mango with his mouth. What an amusing and thrilling *līlā* of *sakhyā-rasa*—both holding the same mango in the mouth, both shedding tears of love, both drowned in the sea of *bhāva* without any consciousness of the outer world! Ghoṣa Bābū was reminded of the *banā-bhojana-līlā*¹⁶ of Kṛṣṇa and his playmates and began to sing a song relating to it.

On hearing the song Bābā Mahārāja fell uncon-

scious on the ground. His teeth clinched, body bent like a bow, tremor, horripilation and sweating, etc. began to appear on the body by turns. Ghoṣa Bābū began to sing the same song repeatedly. Rāmadāsa joined him. After sometime Bābā Mahārāja himself, in a half-conscious state began to sing different songs of *sakhyā-rasa*. Everyone lost outward consciousness. Everyone felt he was under some tree in a forest enjoying the *banā-bhojana-līlā* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. After the *kīrtana* Bābā took the *thāla* of mangoes in his hand. Turn by turn he put mangoes into the mouth of each of the devotees and himself took his *adharāmṛta*,¹⁷ and then himself ate a mango and gave *adharāmṛta* to each of them.

Rāmadāsa now always lived with Barhā Bābājī Mahārāja. He became his right hand. His main function was to assist him in *saṅgikīrtana*. Often Bābā said to him, "Bhāi Rāma! Would you sing the Name for a while?" Rāmadāsa sang like one inspired and Bābā enjoyed like one drowned in the ocean of *bhāva*. Bābā was pleased to give him *bheka*.¹⁸

It was the nature of Rādhārāmanā Bābā to behave towards everyone, whether his disciple or not, in a friendly and loving manner. But if anyone among his disciples behaved in a manner which was prejudicial to Bhakti, he did not hesitate to chastise him. Rāmadāsa was not an exception to this.

Once there was a festival in the *āśrama* of Śrī Gauraharī Dāsa Bābājī, the guru of Barhā Bābā Mahārāja and Rāmadāsa was performing *kīrtana*. He was so overwhelmed with *bhāva* that tears were incessantly

¹⁶ The *līlā* of Kṛṣṇa and His friends sitting together and snatching food from each others mouth at mid-day in the forest.

¹⁷ *Prasāda*.

¹⁸ *Vaiṣṇava saṅgyāsa*.

streaming out of his eyes and from time to time tremor appeared on his body with such intensity that the body became invisible. Suddenly he shouted "āre āmāra Nitāi, re—O Nitāi, our Nitāi!" and began to weep loudly. He repeated the same line over and over again in consonance with the beats of *khola* and *karatāla*, and wept. Those playing on *khola* and *karatāla* and others also sang the line and wept. This continued till 12 o'clock, when someone said, "Barhā Bābā has come." Barhā Bābā had been busy in Rādhāramana Bagh. When he came to know that *kirtana*, which started early in the morning, was still going on to the utter discomfiture of the invited guests, he came probably to stop *kirtana*. Rāmadāsa stopped *kirtana*. He went out and made obeisance to Bābā. Bābā said, "Rāma! You don't know *sevā*. You have learnt that to weep in *kirtana*s is the only kind of *bhajana*. Vaisnavas have been invited to take *mahāprasāda*. Everything is ready. But it was 12 o'clock, still your *kirtana* did not stop. You do not know how much inconvenience you have caused to the Vaisnavas. It is not enough to have *prema. sevā* is also necessary."

After the *bhoga* was offered to the deity and the Vaisnavas were fed, Bābā sat down to eat with his disciples and companions. He asked, "Where is Rāmadāsa?" Someone said, "He is feeling hurt and is sitting alone at Beḍāla Ghāta."

Bābā said, "Go and call him for taking *mahāprasāda*."

The man went and returned to say, "Rāma Dādā is still sitting alone and brooding over something. Tears are profusely streaming out of his eyes. I called him several times. But he did not reply."

"I see. He is angry with me," said Bābā. He stood up and went out of the door and shouted, "Rāma!"

Rāmadāsa came and stood before Bābā with his head cast down. Bābā embraced him lovingly and said, "You are angry because I scolded you. Look, it is necessary for a man, who does *Kṛṣṇa-bhajana* to take care that he does not give trouble or cause any inconvenience to anyone." He took Rāmadāsa with him and made him sit by his side in the *paṅgata*¹⁹ to take *mahāprasāda*. While taking *mahāprasāda*, if he found anything to his taste, he put it on the plate of Rāmadāsa saying, "See how this tastes."

In 1905 Śrī Rādhāramana Carāṇa Dāsa Deva disappeared from the world to join the eternal *līlā* of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in celestial Vṛndāvana. At the time of his disappearance he gave his *karatāla* to Rāmadāsa. Along with the *karatāla* he gave him his *śakti* and entrusted him with the responsibility of preaching *Harināma* through *kirtana*. Accordingly he started preaching through *kirtana* with Calcutta as the centre of preaching. His whole life was devoted to *kirtana*. Apart from the *trisaṇḍhya-kirtana*, which he performed every day, he went from place to place performing *kirtana* in Hansabhas and the houses of devotees. On the dates on which Mahāprabhu or his companions performed any *līlā* in any particular place, he went to that place along with his disciples and the other devotees and performed *kirtana* relating to that particular *līlā*. For example, he performed Rathā-Yātrā *kirtana* in Jagannātha Puri on the Rathā-Yātrā day, *darīdamahotsava-kirtana* in Pāñihāṭī on the day on which Nityānanda Prabhu performed *darīdamahotsava* and *nagara-kirtana* in Vṛndāvana on the day of Mahāprabhu's visit to Vṛndāvana. On the day of disappearance of a

¹⁹ Line of persons seated for taking *mahāprasāda*.

companion of Mahāprabhu or an *ācārya* or devotee, he performed *sūcaka-kīrtana*.²⁰ Thus hardly a day passed when he did not perform some special *kīrtana*.

Rādhāramaṇa also passed on to Rāmadāsa his supernatural power of composing songs at the time of *kīrtana*. All the songs composed and sung by him at the time of *kīrtana*, and noted down by his disciples are now published in three big volumes.

At the time of *kīrtana*, the *sāttvika-bhāvas* that appeared on his body, were also, like the *sāttvika-bhāvas* that appeared on the body of Rādhāramaṇa Bābā, extraordinary. Tears streamed out of his eyes so profusely that a man had to sit by his side to wipe them. In humiliation even the long hairs of his *śikhā* used to stand erect. Tremor used to be so intense that it made the body invisible. Sometimes he had tremor in one half of his body and stupor in the other half. Sometimes he was seen springing one foot above the ground while performing *kīrtana* in sitting posture. Even at the time of his routine worship or *mantra-smaraṇa* he used to be sometimes so overwhelmed with *bhāva* that it made him roar like a lion and people, who heard the sound at a distance, understood that he was doing *mantra-smaraṇa*.

Rāmadāsa Bābāji had surrendered himself at the feet of Rādhāramaṇa Bābāji Mahārāja so completely that he did not have a separate existence of his own. He went about from place to place, doing *saṃkīrtana* at his behest and for his pleasure and by his *śakti*. If by chance he had to face any opposition anywhere, he faced it fearlessly by his *śakti*.

²⁰ *Kīrtana* relating to the life of a saint on the anniversary of his disappearance.

Once he was invited by the people of Viṣṇupur on the occasion of *Nāma-yaṇa*, which they had organized. Viṣṇupur had been a stronghold of Vaiṣṇavas since the time of Rājā Virahāmavīra of Viṣṇupur. But at this time there were a large number of people there, who were against *kīrtana* and did not want that the people of Viṣṇupur should come under the influence of Rāmadāsa Bābāji. As soon as Rāmadāsa Bābā reached there with his party, the news went round that when his *kīrtana* procession would reach Lālabāndhāpāda, the locality where the *yaṇa* was going on, they would be beaten by opponents.

Advaita Dāsa Bābā, one of the companions of Rāmadāsa Bābā, said to him, "Dādā! Have you heard? You will have to face a violent mob, when your *kīrtana* reaches Lālabāndhāpāda tomorrow. Let us not go for *kīrtana*."

Bābā said, "Whose *kīrtana*? Yours, mine or Gurudeva Rādhāramaṇa's? On whose behalf have you come here for *kīrtana*? Pray to Gurudeva or to Nītāi Cānd so that there may not be any disturbance in *kīrtana*."

The next day in the morning Rāmadāsa Bābā started for Lālabāndhāpāda, performing *kīrtana* with his party. He first invoked Rādhāramaṇa and Nītāi Cānd with the sound of *karatālas* then started singing in a loud tone—

"*Bhaja Nītāi-Gaura Rādhe -Śyāma*

Japa Hare Kṛṣṇa-Hare Rāma"

The people of Viṣṇupur announced the beginning of *kīrtana* by blowing conch-shells and ringing bells. Thousands of people began to come to join the *kīrtana*. As the *kīrtana* procession proceeded, flowers were thrown on it from either side of the road. The police had come to know about the possibility of violence. Therefore

arrangements were made for armed guards to head the procession.

When the procession reached near Lālabāndhāpāḍa everyone saw a large number of people standing at some distance with *lāthis* spears and daggers and shouting, "Come Nītā-Gaura Rādhe-Śyāma! We are here to teach your Nītā-Gaura Rādhe-Śyāma a lesson."

The procession stopped. The police asked the mob to disperse. But they did not. The police warned that if they did not disperse they would be fired at. Still they kept on shouting violent remarks and slogans. The guards then started aiming their guns at them. Bullets were about to be fired, when Rāmadāsa Bābā, who was still performing *kīrtana* unmindful of what was happening, suddenly got inspired to break the police cordon and march on singing yet more loudly and passionately.

*"Bhaja Nītā-Gaura Rādhe-Śyāma
Japa Hare Kṛṣṇa-Hare Rāma"*

Everyone was aghast. The guns could not be fired, because Bābā came between the violent mob and the guns ready to fire. Bābā made obeisance to the people, who had come to attack him by lying prostrate on the ground, then proceeded towards the stage, on which the *Nāma-yajna* was going on. There was not the slightest trace of fear on his face. He was doing *kīrtana* continuously. Tears of love were flowing from his eyes. He was so maddened with *bhāva* that from time to time he shrieked aloud. His shrieks seemed to rend the sky and send thrill in the hearts of people round about. At that time Śrī Hṛī Kāvīrāja, the chief organizer of *Nāma-yajna*, came forward. He garlanded him and took him to the stage, amidst shouts of *Haribol* and the sound of conch-shells.

The people, who were inclined towards violence were also filled with *bhāva*. They joined the *kīrtana* and began to sing and dance with others.²¹

In 1951 Rāmadāsa Bābā went to Vṛndāvana with about 250 devotees to perform *Nagara-kīrtana* on Kārtika Pūrṇima, the day on which Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu visited Vṛndāvana. The author, who lived in Agra at that time, also went to Vṛndāvana to join the *nagara-kīrtana* with Dr. Gokula Nārāyaṇa Vyāsa, Professor of Medicine in the Agra Medical College. Accidentally Rāmadāsa Bābā fell ill. He had high fever and Dr. S.K. Dāsa, the famous physician of Calcutta, who had come with him, advised him not to go for *nagara-kīrtana* that day. He agreed, but said that he would inaugurate the *nagara-kīrtana* and go only a few steps with the *kīrtana* party and return. He remembered Śrī Rādhāramaṇa and started *kīrtana*. Tears, tremor, and the other *sattvika-bhāvas* appeared on his body. He was so overpowered with *bhāva* that he forgot all about himself. He went on and on dancing and singing. No one had the courage to stop him. *Kīrtana* started at 5 p.m. from the temple of Mahāprabhu, and going through Gopēśvara Mahādeva, Rāngajī's Temple, Nāja-kī-Mandī, Banakhandī, Sevākunja and Imālītā, it returned to Mahāprabhu's temple at 11 p.m. All along Bābā was singing and dancing and shedding tears. He was 75 years old at that time, the author was 43 and Dr. Vyāsa about 50. Both Dr. Vyāsa and the author had to sit down at several places and take rest during the *nagara-kīrtana*. But Bābā continued to sing and dance without any sign of fatigue for six hours.

²¹ Sri Vinayabhusana Kaviraja, *Sri Gurukāthe Prasanga*, pp. 49-52.

swimming in an ocean of *bhāva* such as we had never experienced before.

The life of Rāmadāsa Bābājī Mahārāja was a continuous stream of *Harināma-kīrtana*. He had so identified himself with *Harināma* that all the *śakti* of *harināma* was his own. He could at will do anything that *Harināma* could do. He could cure diseases, remove the want and suffering of people and even breathe life into the dead. His life is full of such acts of mercy upon people, who came in contact with him. We shall cite only a few.

Once Bābā was staying in Viṣṇupur at the house of his disciple Sucānd Rakṣita. Telegraphic message was received that Sucānd's brother-in-law was admitted into a hospital on account of cholera. Immediately Sucānd went to Calcutta. On reaching the hospital he saw that his brother-in-law was lying dead and his people were waiting outside the hospital with a cot and garlands, etc. to carry the dead body.

In Viṣṇupur Sucānd's old mother began to weep and yell and dash her head against the ground in front of Bābā. Bābā was moved. He could not help saying, "Do not worry. He will be alright."

At that time the dead body was being carried outside the hospital. The sweeper carrying the body saw that it was breathing. He ran and informed the doctor. The doctor was stupefied. The patient soon recovered and went back home.²²

Bābā Maharaja's disciple Haripada Kavirāja lived

²² Sri Vinayabhusana Kaviraja, *Sri Gurukāthe Prasanga*, pp. 185-186.

in Bānkurā. Bābā was always kindly disposed towards him, because he rendered free service to Vaiṣṇavas. His house itself was a hospital for the ailing Vaiṣṇavas, who came to him for treatment and returned when cured. In 1921 his sister Śāntabāla died. The same day Baba's disciple Āśu Bābū had gone to Calcutta for some work. He went to Bābā and said, "Kavirāja Mahāśaya is in great distress. His sister Śāntabāla is about to breathe her last. She may already be dead." Bābā was stunned. After a minute's silence he said, "Nothing to worry. She will be alright."

Śāntabāla was lying dead. A man was sent to Hādamāsādā to bring her husband. On his arrival the dead body was to be taken out for funeral. He could not come till late at night. At 2 p.m. an old lady came to Kavirāja Mahāśaya, sitting in the drawing room with some other members of the family and said, "Haripada! Come and see. Śāntabāla asked for water. After drinking water she turned side and slept." Everyone went inside and was surprised to see Śāntabāla breathing while she was asleep.²³

In 1951 Baba's disciple Śrī Gaurāṅga Dāsa Bābājī fell ill. His disciple Dr. Gokula Nārāyaṇa Vyāsa took him to his house in Agra for treatment. But his condition continued to deteriorate. It began to appear that he would not survive for more than 24 hours. Next day early in the morning Dr. Vyāsa took him back to Vṛndāvana by his car. While going he was lying senseless in the car and Dr. Vyāsa was apprehending that he might breathe

²³ Sri Vinayabhusana Kaviraja, *Sri Gurukāthe Prasanga*, pp. 186-187.

his last on the way. At that time Rāmadāsa Bābājī was doing his morning *pūjā* in Calcutta. A disciple was helping him take the *caranāmṛta* of various Thākura's, which he was accustomed to take at the time of *pūjā*. Suddenly his eyes widened and he sat still with *caranāmṛta* in his hand. The disciple said, "Bābā! Take it." Bābā replied, "O! Gaurāṅga is going. I will not let him go before me."

Simultaneously Gaurāṅga Dāsa opened his eyes. His condition began to improve. He lived for one more year and passed away only fifteen days after Rāmadāsa had left his body.

It was not only towards his disciples that Rāmadāsa Bābājī was merciful. His heart melted even for his enemies and the most degraded souls. Once Bābā was resting in the drawing room of Sucānd Rakṣit in Viṣṇupur after performing *kīrtana* somewhere in the neighbourhood. His companions were resting in an adjoining house. At that time a drunkard, whose name was Kulamaṇi Ācārya and who was inimical towards Vaiṣṇavas, came in the guise of a Vaiṣṇava *sādhū*, singing a song, caricaturing the Vaiṣṇava *sādhū*s and dancing, gesticulating and playing a musical instrument called *khanjani*²⁴. The song said:

*"I am a Vaiṣṇavī²⁵
You know why?
My wife died and my son,
I came to Vṛndāvana.
Now what a fun
In Kṛṣṇa-bhajan!*

²⁴ A small drum, which is struck by fingers.
²⁵ Vaiṣṇava *Sādhū*.

*Dainties to eat of all kinds,
Woman to serve at all times.
My days in merriment pass by.
Now king of kings am I..."*

Sucānd Rakṣita could not tolerate this kind of caricature of Vaiṣṇava *sādhū*s. He dealt such a strong blow at the nose of the singer that his nose began to bleed. Other devotees also came running and shouting, "Hold him, beat him!" Rāmadāsa Bābā heard them shouting. He came out and said, holding the singer close to his breast, "Do not beat him. He has assumed the *veśa* (guise) of a Vaiṣṇava *sādhū*—the *veśa*, which is sacred, which has enabled many to cross the ocean of *Māyā*. Pūtānā had attained Kṛṣṇa only on account of her *veśa*. Respect the *veśa*. Instead of beating him glorify him so that you may be blessed with this *veśa* and attain Kṛṣṇa by doing *bhajana* according to the *veśa*."

On hearing this everyone began to take the dust of the feet of Kulamaṇi Ācārya. Kulamaṇi fell at the feet of Bābā and said, "Bābā! You are no other than Nityānanda. Kindly deliver me from the bondage of *Māyā*!" He said so and began to weep. Bābā also brought tears in his eyes. He consoled him and with his own hands washed his nose.

The next day Kulamaṇi again came to Bābā. His head was shaved and he wore *Tulasī-kanṭhi* in his neck and *tiāka* on his forehead. He fell at Bābā's feet and wept and prayed for *veśa-aśraya*²⁶. Bābā gave him *mantra* and asked Bābā Gopāla Dāsa to give him *veśa*. After *veśa* his name was Kṛṣṇakinkara Dāsa. Kṛṣṇakinkara Dāsa went to Vṛndāvana and began to live in the temple

²⁶ Vaiṣṇava *sannyāsa*.

of Śrī Vrajendra Gosvāmī and do *sevā* and *Kṛṣṇa-bhajana*. By the grace of Bābā he was not only reformed, but set firmly on the path of Bhakta.

Once in Baba's *āśrama* the costly watch of Śrī Duṭṭā Bābū of Calcutta was stolen. The watch was found in the suitcase of a man named Nagaravāsī Advaita Dāsa. Bābā said to Bābā Mahārāja, "Dādā, it is not safe to keep such a thief in the *āśrama*. Turn him out." Bābā said, "I have been asked by Gurudeva to accept, not to reject. I have to live with all kinds of people, whether good or bad."

Bābā used to say, "If we come to know that a man is fallen and turn him out, because he is fallen, who will keep him? We must keep him with us and reform him. It was for the deliverance of the fallen that Nītāi Cānd's heart used to weep."

Once a beggar, suffering from leprosy of virulent type, came to Bābā's *āśrama* and asked for food. At that time every one in the *āśrama* had taken his food except Bābā. His *prasāda* was kept aside in a plate. He put the plate before the beggar. He ate as much as he could and left the rest. Bābā ate the remaining *prasāda*, without any hesitation or feeling of abhorrence. The inmates of the *āśrama* shivered to see him eating the remnants of the leper, but no one had the courage to say anything to him. This not only provided an instance of Baba's ever flowing mercy towards even the most fallen of all the *jīvas*, it also provided an instance of having *cinnaya-buddhi*²⁷ towards *Bhagavat-prasāda*.

²⁷ Regarding the *prasāda* as *cinnaya* or spiritual

The *śāstra* says that the *prasāda* is never defiled, because it is *cinnaya* or spiritual. A man, who thinks otherwise is doomed.

Once, when Bābā was staying in Samājabāḍī in Navadvīpa, a drunkard came to him, when he was dead drunk. He fixed his eyes at him and said, "You are Rāma-dāsa Bā-bā? I am U-pe-na-dut-ta. I have murdered many people. See, how many scars of dagger I have on my back." With this he turned his back towards Bābā. Then coming forward towards Bābā he said, "You Rāmadāsa. Correct? I Upena Dutta," and fell at Baba's feet. As he did this the two bottles of liquor he was holding under his armpit fell and broke. Liquor was scattered all over. The *sādhus* and the Gosvāmīs, sitting near by, receded backwards. But Bābā Mahārāja did not move. The drunkard began to roll on the ground smeared with liquor and cry, "You Rāmadāsa Bābā? Correct? Will you not deliver me? I Upena Dutta."

Some of the *sādhus* began to think of calling the police. Bābā kept on silently watching the drunkard and looking at him piteously. Tears were flowing from his eyes and his body was trembling. Suddenly he shouted, "Ha Nītāi!" and with both hands made the drunkard stand. The drunkard let his head fall on Baba's chest. Bābā began to walk with him. The drunkard went a few steps and fell. Then Bābā pressed the point between the two eyebrows on his forehead with the fingers of his right hand and uttered some *mantra*. While he was uttering the *mantra* the drunkard lay quietly as if he was asleep. After some time he opened his eyes and began to look round like one stupefied. Bābā again made him stand and throwing his arm round him like his brother, began

to walk with him. His disciples kept on looking. No one had the courage to say anything. He went out of the *āśrama* with him and proceeded towards *Śrīvāsa-aṅga-ghāta*. Lalitā Sakhī asked a *sādhu* to accompany him.

Bābājī Mahārāja had not yet taken *prasāda*. So everyone kept waiting for him. But he returned in the evening after the evening *ārati*. The drunkard came with him. He had completely changed. He wore a *tilaka* on his forehead and a *tulasī-kanthī* round his neck. Bābā had made him wear one of the *kanthīs*, he wore himself. He was calm, tranquilized and subdued and was walking with head cast down, like one found guilty of committing some serious offense. But he was no more Upena Dutta, but Upen Dā, the God-brother of the disciples of Bābā.

Bābājī Mahārāja was once invited by the devotees of Ārāmabāgh, in district Vardhamāna, for *aṣṭaprahara-kirtana*. After getting down from the train at Vardhamāna station, when he was going on foot with his thirty disciples to Ārāmabāgh, it was raining and the way was slippery. But they were going on performing *kirtana*. Suddenly the rain became torrential. The way was filled with knee-deep water. They had to take shelter in the verandah of the thatched cottage of an old lady outside Ārāmabāgh. *Kirtana* began to be performed at a higher pitch. The sound of *khōla* and *keratāla* rent the sky. The devotees of Ārāmabāgh, who were going to receive them, also came there and joined the *kirtana*. They saw that Bābā Mahārāja was completely lost in *kirtana*. The intensity of his absorption was apparent from *aṣṭasātvika-bhāvas* that constantly adorned his body. He had forgotten all about himself and the *kirtana* at Ārāmabāgh. Since the rain also was continuing with undiminished vigour and

intensity and it was not possible to take him to Ārāmabāgh, they decided to hold the *aṣṭaprahara-kirtana* at the cottage itself. Sometime after arrangements for *kirtana* were made under a swiftly improvised canopy in the courtyard of the cottage. The next day many people came from Ārāmabāgh and joined the *kirtana*.

The old lady was an outcast from society, because she had been adulterous in her young age. No respectable person had ever visited her. She was leading a miserable life in her old age. The fire of penitence always burned in her heart. But today providence had suddenly smiled on her. Her cottage was turned into a temple for *kirtana*. The *aṣṭaprahara-kirtana-yaṇa* purified her heart and marked the beginning of a new chapter in her life. She took initiation from Bābā and was named Satyadāśī. She sold her property and went to Vṇḍāvāna to lead the life of a devotee.

Once Bābā Mahārāja was going to Puri to participate in Ratha-Yātrā. He sat with his companions in a reserved compartment at the Hawrah station. Someone stole the suitcase of his disciple Śrī Nanda Bābā. The suitcase contained two thousand three hundred rupees collected by the devotees for Ratha-Yātrā. A well dressed person, looking like a gentleman, had stolen the suitcase. After sometime he was caught by the police and brought before Bābā with the suitcase. The police wanted Bābā to lodge a report against him. But Bābā was standing quietly and looking piteously at him. Tears were coursing down his eyes. The thief shivered to see him and fell at his feet. Bābā came to know about his real condition. He said to one of his God-brothers painfully, 'He is in trouble. He does not have money to go anywhere. Give

him some money." After giving him money he and his companions went and sat in the train. The train left and there was nobody to report against him.

The story of Nayanatāra Devī of Sonāmukhī city is also an example of Bābā Mahārāja's mercy upon the fallen and the sinful. Nayanatāra came of a respectable Brahmin family of Sonāmukhī. All the members of her family were educated. She was also highly educated. She was married to the only son of a rich man of Vārāṇasī who was learned but not handsome. Nayanatāra did not like him. She ran away with the son of a goldsmith. The goldsmith's son took her to Delhi, Agra, Lucknow and several other places. Finally he took her to Calcutta. He lived with her there for some time and then gave her up. She was obliged to go back to her parents. But she was not well received in the family. After some time she went to Bānkurā and began to live like a prostitute in a locality, where the prostitutes lived.

Once Bābā Mahārāja happened to pass through that locality, while he was out for *nagara-kirtana*. He looked at her piteously and mercifully. His glance touched her heart. There was a total change in her. The next day she took initiation from Bābā, distributed all her wealth among the other prostitutes, shaved her head and went to Vṛndāvana with a single *dhori*, which she had on her body. For a long time no one knew anything about her.

In 1933 Bābā went to Vṛndāvana on the occasion of Rāsotsava. A large number of devotees and Gosvāmīs accompanied him. One day he was doing *Svapnavilāsa-līlā-kirtana* 28 in Nidhuvana. One of the stanzas of the

²⁸ *Kirtana* relating to the dream in which Rādhā saw Gaurāṅga before His appearance and felt attracted towards Him.

kīrtana was:

*Vṛndāvana kuñja nikuñjahi nivaseyi
tuhu vara nāgara kāna /
ahamīśa tuhān deraśa binu jhūrala
tejaba sabahu parāna //*

—O Kṛṣṇa! You revel in the *kunjas* of Vṛndāvana, I know
But You do not appear before me
In Your separation I weep and weep
Weeping I shall die!"

As soon as a lady heard this, she fell senseless on the ground. Her consciousness never returned. She actually died weeping in separation of Kṛṣṇa. She was the same Nayanatāra, who was outcast by society. By the mercy of Bābājī Mahārāja she became a true Vaiṣṇava. The manner in which she died would be covered by many saints. She left her body in Nidhuvana in the presence of Gurudeva. While listening to *Nikunja-līlā-kīrtana* sung by Gurudeva, she left her physical body and entered transcendental *Nikunja* in her transcendental body.

Once Śrī Rādhāramaṇa Carāṇa Dāsa Deva had said to Rāmadāsa, "Rāma! Do not build any new temple or Maṭha. If possible renovate the old ones and make proper arrangements for the service of the Śrī Vīgrahas in them. Accordingly he did not build any new temple even on the insistence of the devotees. But the number of old temples and Maṭhas he renovated and the number of Śrī Vīgrahas for whose service he made adequate arrangements, is surprisingly large. Special examples of this are the Handāsa Thākura Maṭha of Pūrī and the Pathabāgī Āśrama of Barāhanagara, Calcutta. In 1907

Handāsa Ṭhākura Maṭha was going to be auctioned and delivered to Christians. He made stupendous efforts to take possession of it and ultimately succeeded. He made suitable arrangements for its service, which are continuing.

The purpose for which Jagadbanhu Prabhu had brought Rāmadāsa Bābā from Vṛndāvana was now fulfilled. He had—like a moving Kalpataru—blessed thousands of people with its fruits and set them on the path of Bhakti. It was now time for him to follow Lalitā Sakhī, his god-sister, who had left this world to join the *Nitya-līlā* of Rādhā-Govinda in 1946. So in 1953 on the Agrahāyana Śuklā Cahirdaśi he woke up at 2.30 a.m. as usual and said to his attendant, "Now I have to go. Didī (Lalitā Sakhī) is calling me. Call everyone. Get the Ṭhākura (the pictures of Nītā-Gaura.)" After this he took bath and sat down on the floor. All the inmates of the *āśrama* arrived along with the pictures of Nītā-Gaura. He asked them to chant *Harināma*. Then he shouted "Jai Jagadbanhu! Jai Mahābīra Rādhāramaṇa!" and himself began to sing aloud:

*"Bhaja Nītā-Gaura Rādhā -Śyāma
Japa Hare Kṛṣṇa-Hare Rāma"*

Everyone joined the *kīrtana* with tears flowing from his eyes. Slowly his voice became fainter. At the end there was complete silence. Rāmadāsa Bābī was no more. He had joined the *Nitya-līlā* in celestial Vṛndāvana.

CHAPTER XVI

ŚRĪMATI LAKṢMĪ MANI DEVĪ

(Dakṣiṇeśvara/Purī)

Śrīmatī Lakṣmī Mani Devī was the niece of Rāmakṣṇa, the famous saint of Dakṣiṇeśvara. She was born on the Basanta Pancamī day in 1864 in village Kāmārapukūra of Hugali district. Her father Śrī Rāmeśvara Caṭṭopādhyāya and mother Śākambarī Devī were revered by the people of the village as *Rīṣi* and *Rīṣipatnī*.

Lakṣmī Devī's life story is wonderful from beginning to end. From the very moment of her birth she started weeping and continued to weep. Her people tried by every possible means to stop her weeping, but couldn't. Akṣaya Kumāra, the elder son of Rāmeśvara's elder brother, was so fed up with her constant weeping that one day he stealthily went out with her and left her on the cremation ground. When Akṣaya Kumāra saw that Lakṣmī's mother and everyone else in the family were extremely worried on account of her sudden disappearance, he told them that he had left her on the cremation ground. Immediately they went to the cremation ground. They did not hear the sound of her weeping. Therefore they thought that she must be lying dead somewhere or must have been carried away by the wolf. But there was no end to their joy and astonishment when they saw her lying under a tree, laughing and waving freely her hands and feet.

Lakṣmī was brought home After that she never wept This was interpreted in different ways by different people Some thought that her continuous weeping after birth indicated that the world was full of suffering. Man continued to suffer and weep from beginning to end. The cremation ground symbolized death When man died for the world and lived only for the Lord, he lived happily A *sādhū* said that her early days would pass in the darkness of suffering. But from darkness would emerge light that would dispel the darkness not only of her heart, but of the heart of everyone, who would come in contact with her She would like a lightpost shed her light all around.

The prophecy of the *sādhū* came true. Her father died, when she was but a child. At the age of twelve she was married to Śrī Dhanakṛṣṇa, a young man, who was a descendant of Śrīnivasācārya Prabhu. When Rāmakṛṣṇa came to know about this, he said to his nephew Hṛdaya, "Lakṣmī will soon become a widow." Hṛdaya said, "Why do you forebode such disaster?" Then Rāmakṛṣṇa said, "O Hṛdaya! Lakṣmī is not ordinary She is the incarnation of my family goddess Śītālā. Mā told me so even before her birth. Has she come to lead a householder's life with a man belonging to the class of ordinary *jīvas*? She has to rise high in *sādhana* and do immense good to this world."

Mā Lakṣmī became a widow even before she went to her father-in-law's house to live with her husband. The path of her full development in spiritual life was thus laid out. Even while a child, she used to assist her mother in the worship of the family deities, Śrī Raghubīra Śālagrāma and goddess Śītālā She made on a brass plate the footprints of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa with the paste of sandal-

wood and worshipped Them with *tulasī* leaves.

She was anxious to learn reading so that she might read *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* During those days it was considered immoral for girls to go to school But she was not an ordinary girl She showed courage and without caring for morality or immorality and the sanction of the society started going to school. Within a short time she learned enough to be able to read religious books.

Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa had already given her *Kṛṣṇa-mantra* and engaged her in the worship of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. But her father-in-law desired that she should be duly initiated in the *paramparā* (line of disciplic succession) of Śrīnivasācārya Prabhu and follow the ways of worship of that *sampradāya* Therefore he himself initiated her in his *sampradāya* by giving her *Gaura-mantra* and the other *mantras*. He also transferred in her name her husband's share in the property of the family But she at the advice of Rāmakṛṣṇa, transferred the same in the name of the Vīgrahas of Nītā-Gaura worshipped in the family.

At this time there happened an episode which proved her extraordinary valour and faith in the principles of true religion Śrī Lāla Bābū, the landlord of Kāmārapukūra made arrangements for a special ceremony to worship the goddess Śītālā He chose the image of the goddess worshipped in her family He came to her house with all the materials for worship along with a goat for sacrifice Lakṣmī Devī said to him courteously, "In our house we do *sātvika-pūjā* of Śrī Raghubīra Śālagrāma, Mahādeva and Śītālā Devī We cannot allow sacrifice, which is *tāmasika*!" Lāla Bābū and his men felt insulted

¹ In the mood of ignorance.

They decided to hold the sacrifice in spite of her and started making necessary arrangements. Then Lakṣmī Devī burnt with rage. She rushed at him with a sword in hand to kill him. She was in such terrible form that no one had the courage to stand before her. Lāla Bābū had to pray to her with folded hands and promise not to perform the sacrifice in order to pacify her. Everybody was surprised to see her in that condition. They thought that at that time Śītālā Mā herself had taken possession of her, otherwise how could she at that young age have so much courage.

At the age of fourteen Lakṣmī Devī went to Dakṣiṇeśvara and began to live with Śāradā Mā, the wife of Rāmakṛṣṇa. Śāradā Mā was happy to get her. She was happy to get the opportunity of doing *bhājana* in the proximity and under the supervision of Rāmakṛṣṇa and Śāradā Mā. Later while describing her life during those days she used to say, "I lived with Mā in Naubatakhānā.² It was a small room. It used to be mainly occupied with provisions and other things. In the same room Mā cooked and I assisted her in cooking. The room was so small that Ṭhākura used to compare it with a cage for birds and call us humorously Śūka³ and Sāri.⁴ Still I never felt any kind of inconvenience in that room. I considered myself blessed to have an opportunity of living in a place, where I could learn a great deal from Mā and hear the valuable teachings of Rāmakṛṣṇa Deva." Rāmakṛṣṇa kept a strict watch on

² A small room over the gate of a palace or temple meant for beating drum and blowing *Shahana*, an instrument like horn.

³ Parrot

⁴ A small female bird of the parrot species

Lakṣmī to see whether she did *japa* and *dhyāna* regularly. Early in the morning, when he got up, he called Mā and Lakṣmī to see whether they were awake or not. Sometimes, when he found them asleep, he threw water on them to make them get up.⁵

In the evening, when everyone had gone, Rāmakṛṣṇa usually narrated to Mā and Lakṣmī and some devotees, who were particularly close to him, some stories relating to *Kṛṣṇa-līlā* and Mahāprabhu's *līlā*. Sometimes Lakṣmī sang to him in her sweet voice songs relating to *Kṛṣṇa-līlā*. Rāmakṛṣṇa went into *samādhi* to hear them.

When Rāmakṛṣṇa lived in Kāśīpur, he twice worshipped Lakṣmī as Śītālā. He once said to Girishchandra, the famous dramatist, "Give Lakṣmī sweets to eat some day. By offering sweets to her you will offer *bhoga* to Śītālā. She is a partial manifestation of her."⁶

In 1886, after the disappearance of Rāmakṛṣṇa Deva, Lakṣmī went to Vṛndāvana with Mā Śāradā. They lived in Kālā Bābū Kunja. At that time they went on 84 *krośa* long *Vraja-mandala Parikramā*. Lakṣmī had taken with her the deity Gopālā, Whom she worshipped. She kept Him sometimes in the tent, sometimes on a tree so that He might enjoy the natural beauty of the surroundings. When she reached the Kadambakhandi of Barasānā, she lapsed into *samādhi*. She regained outward consciousness after the ladies with her had sung *Nāma-kīrtana* to her for a long time. After the *samādhi* she said that *Vraja-dhāma* was *cinnmaya* (spiritual), *Vraja-līlā* was eternal. Anyone could see the *līlā* by the mercy of Rādhārāṇī. From this time onwards she often had

⁵ Svāmī Tejasānanda: *Sri Sri Ma o Saptasadhuka*, p. 160

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 161

the *darśana* of Kṛṣṇa-*līlā* and the slightest stimulus made her go into *samādhi*

After living in Vṛndāvana for a year she went back to Dakṣiṇeśvara and began to live with her elder brother Rāmalāla. There also she often went into *samādhi*. Sometimes after *samādhi* she remained in a state of *bhāva* for three or four days and did not eat anything. Her close associates and devotees, including Viṣṇumohana Dāsa, Kṛṣṇamayī and Kamalā Devī somehow made her drink the water of green coconut or the Ganges. At that time her body used to be radiant with a transcendental glow and fragrant with transcendental smell. On her becoming normal, when her close devotees asked her about her internal condition in that state, she replied, "At that time I am engaged in the service of the twin divinities of my heart—Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. I see my physical body lying apart. I do not want to return to the physical body. But you compel me to come back by performing *kirtana*."

Once Lakṣmī Devī went from Dakṣiṇeśvara to Śāradā Mā, who was then living in a house in Bāghbāzār in Calcutta. At that time a festival was going on at the house of Śrī Kunja Malika. Śrī Rādhāramana Carāṇa Dāsa Bābājī had come to grace the festival with his devotees. The main attraction of the festival was the *kirtana* of Rādhāramana Carāṇa Dāsa Bābājī. Lakṣmī Devī went to attend his *kirtana*. Wonderful *sātvika-bhāvas* appeared on his body in his dance and *kirtana*. At that time she went into *samādhi*. After the *samādhi* she said to her devotees, "Rādhāramana Carāṇa Dāsa Deva is the manifestation of Anāṇa Manjarī!"

⁷ From the diary of Śrī Nima Carāṇa Dāsa, a disciple of Lakṣmī Manī Devī

Lakṣmī was beautiful. She had a sweet voice and was a good singer. Besides she was mirthful and frolicsome. She was fond of *līlā-kirtana* and was also good at acting. When in the midst of Śāradā Mā and the other ladies she sang *līlā-kirtana* and did acting to represent the *līlā*, a fountain of bliss always burst out.

In this connection we may reproduce the following description from the *Udbodhana Magazine* of the month of Kartika, 1346 (Banglā):

"Lakṣmī Manī, the pious niece of Rāmakṛṣṇa Deva could do wonderful acting. She had a sweet voice and extraordinary memory. She could reproduce lengthy *līlā-kirtanas* continually for several days, singing two or three hours each day. She sang sometimes *Māna*,⁸ sometimes *Viraha*,⁹ and sometimes *Milana*,¹⁰ *kirtanas*. Mā, Aghora Manī and the other ladies enjoyed her *kirtanas* to their heart's content.

"Sister Niveditā loved the songs of Rāma Prasāda. After the *līlā-kirtana* Lakṣmī Manī sang those songs on her request. One day she was decorated by her as Mā Durgā. She herself assumed the role of lion and, making her sit on her back, began to roar like a lion. Aghora Manī and the other ladies laughed till their sides began to ache."

Lakṣmī Devī loved very much to sing the *līlā-kirtana* relating to the meeting between Mahāprabhu and Nityānanda. Often when she sang this *kirtana* she dressed and decorated herself and acted like Nityānanda. At that time, she placed one hand upon the other and

⁸ Rādhā's wrath

⁹ Rādhā's separation from Kṛṣṇa

¹⁰ Rādhā's union with Kṛṣṇa

blew the horn like Him, it appeared that Nityānanda had manifested Himself in her and a current of *aṣṭasātvika-bhāvas* emerging from her body swept everyone from the mundane into the spiritual world.

The following is an excerpt of what Sister Niveditā has written about her in her book *The Master as I saw Him*:

"Sister Lucky, or Lakṣmī Devī, as is the Indian form of her name, is indeed a niece of Rāmakṣṣa Paramahansa and is still comparatively a young woman. She is widely sought after as a religious teacher and director and is the most gifted and delightful companion. Sometimes she will repeat page after page of some sacred dialogue, out of one of the *sāstras* or religious operas, or again she will make the quiet room rent with gentle merriment, as she poses the different members of the party in groups for religious tableau. Now it is Kālī, and again Sarasvatī; another time it will be Jagadhātrī, or yet again, perhaps, Kṣṇa under the Kadamba tree, that she will arrange with picturesque effect and scant dramatic material."

Lakṣmī Devī regularly read *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* in the evening. Once she went to Kotalpur, a village near Viṣṇupur. Viṣṇumohana Dāsa and some other devotees also went with her. Viṣṇumohana forgot to take *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* along with the other things required for her daily *pūjā*. When Lakṣmī Devī came to know about it, she became anxious about her evening *pāṭha* which she could not forego. She asked her devotees to try to get *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* from someone in the village. They went out in search of the book. Lakṣmī Devī went to a pond to bathe. The devotees could not get a copy of *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* from anyone, because the villagers

were all illiterate farmers. In the meantime came a young *Vrajavāsī*. He gave Viṣṇumohana a new copy of the Barhampur edition of *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* and said, "My master has sent this for Lakṣmī Devī. Give it to her." He gave the book and went. When Lakṣmī Devī returned from the pond Viṣṇumohana gave her the *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* and told her about the *Vrajavāsī* youth, who had brought it. She stood stunned for sometime. Tears came out of her eyes. Then she touched the book worshipfully with her forehead and said, "Viṣṇumohana! You did not make the *Vrajavāsī* sit for a while and did not ask him where from he came and who was his master?" Viṣṇumohana replied, "Mā! I do not know what happened to me. I only kept looking at him. I thought he was probably the servant of a *Vrajavāsī* known to you, who has come to some nearby village." Lakṣmī Devī said, "No, no, not the servant of a *Vrajavāsī*, he was a *pārśada* (associate) of Mahāprabhu. You are lucky to have had the *darśana* of a *pārśada* of Mahāprabhu." That copy of *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* is preserved in the *āśrama* of Lakṣmī Devī in Purī and is worshipped.

In the later days Lakṣmī Devī's devotees made an *āśrama* for her in Svargadvāra in Purī and she began to live in it. Everyday after bathing in the sea she went to Haridāsa Ṭhākura Maṭha for the *darśana* of the *samādhi* of Ṭhākura Haridāsa, to Gambhīrā for the *darśana* of Śrī Rādhākānta Deva, and to the temple of Jagannātha for the *darśana* of Jagannātha. Once she went alone to the sea for bathing. The tidal waves swept her away to Cakratīrtha. A young man came swimming, whose colour was golden, and took her to the shore. In the evening, when she went to the temple of Jagannātha,

she saw the same young man standing in place of Balarāma and looking at her with a bewitching smile on his face. She was lost in *bhāva-samādhi* to see him.

In Purī Lakṣmī Mā met Śrī Vijaya Kṛṣṇa Gosvāmī and Śrī Rāmadāsa Bābājī Rāmadāsa Bābājī Mahārāja went to Purī every year at the time of Ratha-Yātrā and did *kīrtana* in front of the *ratha*. In 1926 at the time of Ratha-Yātrā a devotee of Lakṣmī Mā was staying in the house of Śrī Yatindra Mohana, advocate, to the North of Haranātha Āśrama. At his request Rāmadāsa Bābājī agreed to perform *kīrtana* at the house of Yatindra Mohana one day. That day when he was going to the house of Yatindra Mohana, performing *kīrtana* with his party, he passed by her *āśrama*. She followed him with her disciple Viṣṇudāsa. In Rāmadāsa Bābājī Mahārāja's *kīrtana* at the house of Yatindra Mohana she saw Nityānanda Prabhu and Advaitācārya dancing round Mahāprabhu. Advaitācārya said to Lakṣmī Mā, "Blow the *singā* (horn)." Mā kept quietly sitting. But when he repeatedly asked her to do so, she asked a devotee of Rāmadāsa Bābājī's party whether they had a *singā* with them. He replied, "No." Then she put one hand upon the other and blew *singā*. Every one was surprised to hear the sound exactly like that of *singā*.

After this Lakṣmī Mā often said that Nityānanda danced in the *kīrtana* of Rāmadāsa Bābājī. Also after this, whenever Rāmadāsa Bābājī went to Purī, he also went to her *āśrama* and made obeisance to her. Even today on every Dvādaśī the disciples of Rāmadāsa Bābājī Mahārāja go from Handāsa Ṭhākura's Maṭha to her *āśrama* and perform *kīrtana*.

Once Lakṣmī Mā took her dear disciple Nityānanda

Carāṇa and his wife Kamalā Devī to the *Danta-samādhi* of Śrī Gadādhara Pandita in Keśighāṭa in Vṛndāvana for *darśana* of the *samādhi*. After sometime in a state of *bhāva*, she gave them her tooth and hair and said, "After I am gone both of you live in Vṛndāvana. Keep a place for me. I shall have my body in Purī. But I love Vṛndāvana. I shall live here in the form of my tooth and hair." She left her body in Purī while meditating on *Holi līlā* on the Govinda Dvādaśī day in 1926. Nityānanda Carāṇa built a temple for her tooth and hair in Brahmakūṇḍa near the temple of his family deity Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava in Vṛndāvana. Even today those relics are duly worshipped in that temple.

Lakṣmī Mā had many disciples. While she herself practised *aṣṭakaliya-līlā-smarana*, she prescribed that kind of *sādhana* to only a selected few. To the rest she said, "You only lead a pious life, free from offenses, and do *Nāma-japa*. Leave the rest to me. After your death I shall myself take you to Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and lay you down at Their feet."

CHAPTER XVII

**ŚRĪ KEDĀRANĀTHA
BHAKTIVINODA ṬHĀKURA**
(Navadvīpa)

Śrī Kedāranātha Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura was a descendant of Śrī Puruṣottama Datta, one of the five Kāyasthas, brought to Gauḍa by King Ādiśūra. In the fifteenth generation from King Ādiśūra was born Rājā Kṛṣṇānanda Datta, the father of Śrī Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura and a disciple of Nityānanda Prabhu. In the ninth generation from Rājā Kṛṣṇānanda was born Śrī Ānandacandra Datta, who was a great Vaiṣṇava. Ānandacandra's son was Kedāranātha. His father-in-law was Īśvaracandra Mustafī, a big landlord of Ulā (Vīranagar) in district Nadiyā. Kedāranātha was born in Ulā.

Even when he was six years old he read Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata, etc. with great interest. When nine he began to study astrology from a famous astrologer, named Jagat Bhattācārya. At the age of eleven his father died. He had to face poverty and pass through many trials and tribulations. At twelve he was married. At thirteen he moved to Calcutta and got himself enrolled in the Hindu Charitable Institution School, in which he studied for four years. During this period he wrote articles and poems for the *Hindu Intelligencer* in English. His writings attracted Keśavacandra Sen and Dvijendra Nātha Tagore. Dvijendra

Nātha Tagore became his close friend. Under his guidance he learnt the Sanskrit language and studied the works of Western philosophers.

In 1858 at the age of twenty Kedāranātha was called by his paternal grandfather, Rājavallabha Datta, who lived in Chotimangalpur in Orissa. Rājavallabha Datta was a resident of Calcutta, but had gone to Orissa to pass the last days of his life as a devotee in loneliness. He had in his house the Śrī Vighrahas of Lord Jagannātha and Rādhā-Mādhava, whom he worshipped with devotion. He had divine powers and could predict the future. He told Kedāranātha that he would secure a good job at the age of twenty-seven and would be a great Vaiṣṇava.

His grandfather soon died. After his death he visited all the Maṭhas in Orissa and kept a record of all that he saw. In 1859 he accepted a teaching post in Cuttack (Orissa) and for the first time introduced the teaching of English in the schools of Orissa. In 1860 he was appointed Headmaster of the Bhadra school and he shifted to Bhadra from Cuttack. At this time he wrote a book called *The Maṭhas of Orissa*, which was published in 1860. At the end of the year he got a teacher's job in Midnāpur and shifted there. While in Midnāpur he had to fight vigorously against the *sahajīyas*, a perverted school of the so-called Vaiṣṇavas, who claimed allegiance to Śrī Caitanya, but preached a demonical doctrine totally opposed to His. He also repudiated the Brāhma Dharma, preached by Rāmamohana Ray and others, who did not believe in Śrī Caitanya and the Hindu *śāstras* and preached against the principles of the age old *Sanātana Dharma*.

In 1866 Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, as he was now

called, was appointed Deputy Registrar in Chaparā with powers of Deputy Magistrate and Deputy Collector. In 1868 he was appointed Deputy Magistrate of Dinājpur. But he was soon transferred to Puri. The Commissioner of Puri was much impressed by the learning, the religious character and the administrative capacity of Bhaktvinoda. He entrusted him with the responsibility of managing the affairs of the Jagannātha Temple on behalf of the government. By his effort many malpractices in the temple were removed, the service of the deity was improved and the timings for offering of *bhoga* to the deity were strictly regulated.

Bhaktvinoda was also asked to make investigation against a ferocious yogi, called Bisakisen, who had declared that he was an incarnation of Mahāviṣṇu and had come down on earth to overthrow the British Government and establish Hindu Rāja in this country. He was a terror to the people, because he had mystic powers to cause suffering to them, if they did not accept him as an incarnation and behave towards him accordingly. But he had a large following, because he also had the power to cure diseases and could easily influence the illiterate and the simple hearted people. It was not an easy task to curb or mend him. Thākura Bhaktvinoda made necessary investigations and found him guilty of many offences, including his affairs with women. One day he pounced upon him in the jungle near Bhuvaneśvara, where he lived, with the police superintendent and a force of one hundred armed policemen and arrested him. When he was being tried he used his yogic power to make Bhaktvinoda's second daughter Kādambarī fall seriously ill. On the day on which he was going to deliver the judgement he caused severe pain in his chest so that

he might not be able to go to the court. But Thākura remained firm on account of his unflinching faith in the mercy of God, Who always protects His devotees. By the mercy of God no harm came to his daughter and his pain also vanished just in time for him to go to the court and deliver the judgement. Bisakisen was sentenced to one and half years rigorous imprisonment. His associates, who posed as the incarnations of Śiva and Brahmā, were similarly punished. Bisakisen died in prison.

After five years of service in Puri, Thākura Bhaktvinoda was posted at different places in Bengal. In 1878 he was posted at Narail. While in Narail he took initiation from Śrī Vipinā Bihārī Gosvāmī, a descendant of Śrī Vamśī Badanānanda Gosvāmī, who enjoyed the favour and confidence of Mahāprabhu to such an extent that he was asked by Him to look after His mother and wife, after He had taken *sannyāsa*. In disciplic succession he belonged to the line coming from Jāhnavā Devī, the wife of Prabhu Nityānanda. Later Thākura Bhaktvinoda accepted Jagannātha Dāsa Bābājī as his *śikṣā-guru*.

In 1887 Thākura managed to get himself transferred to Śrīnagar. Then he applied himself to the task of discovering the birthplace of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. The place had been under dispute mainly on account of the changing course of the river Gangā. According to the accounts given in the old books, relating to the birth of Śrī Caitanya, His birth place existed to the East of Gangā. But it was difficult to ascertain what was to the East or to the West of Gangā at the time of His birth. To Thākura Bhaktvinoda the site of His birth was revealed in a vision. He writes in his biography

that one day, at about 10 p.m., he saw "across the Gangā, in the northern direction a large mansion flooded with light." He confirmed with the help of investigations made by him on the basis of the old manuscripts and maps of Nadiyā that the sight revealed to him was the old Māyāpura, the place where Mahāprabhu had appeared.

Towards the end of his life Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda took *veśa* (Vaiṣṇava *sannyāsa*) from Gaurakīśora Dāsa Bābājī and began to practise *bhajana* in seclusion, sometimes in his house in Calcutta, sometimes in Godrumadvīpa. He departed from this world to enter the *Nitya-līlā* of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in 1914.

Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda's contribution to Gaudīya Vaiṣṇava literature is unparalleled. The following is a list of some of the more important works published or written by him

1. *Śrī Kṛṣṇasamhitā*
2. *Kalyāṇa Kalpataru*
3. *Bhagavad-gītā* with the commentary of Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartī
4. *Śrī Caitanyaśikṣāmṛta*
5. *Bhagavad-gītā* with the commentary of Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa
6. *Viṣṇusahasranāma*
7. *Śrī Kṛṣṇa-Vijaya*
8. *Śrī Caitanyopaniṣad*
9. *Āmnāyasūtra*
10. *Śaraṇāgati*
11. *Jaiva Dharma*
12. *Tattvasūtra*
13. *Śrī Gaurāṅga Smerana Maṅgala-stotra*
14. *Harināma Cintāmaṇi*

15. *Duttavarnśamālā*

16. *Śrī Bhāgavatārkaamarīci-mālā*

17. *Dāṇḍa Kaustubha*

Besides these Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda wrote hundreds of sweet songs, each one of which was a sincere outpouring of his heart, overflowing with the nectar of Bhakti. It, therefore, easily compares with the songs of the poets like Candidāsa and Vidyāpati and inspires Bhakti in the heart of anyone, who reads or hears it sung. The following song is cited as an example:

kabe āhā gaurāṅga baiyā /
bhoyana śayane, dehera jetana chāḍiba
virakta baiyān /
Navadvīpa dhāme nagare
abhīmāna parihari /
dhāmavāśi ghare, mādhuکاری labo khāibo
udara bhari /
naditaṭe gṛyā, añjali añjali piba
prabhu padajala /
tarutala paḍi, āśasya tyajiba, pāiba
śarīre baia //
kākulī karniyā gaura-gaḍādhara,
śrī Rādhā-Mādhava nāma /
kāṇḍiyā kāṇḍiyā dāki ucca rave bhramiba
sakala dhāma //
vaiṣṇava dekhīyā paḍiba carana hrdayera
bandhu jāni /
vaiṣṇava ṭhākura prabhura kirtana sikhāibe
dāsa māni //

—O! When shall I sing aloud the name Gaurahari?
 When, forgetting sleep and hunger and all the comforts

of body shall I wander in all humility from village to village in Navadvīpa Dhāma and eat *mādhukari*?

When shall I sit on the bank of Gangā and drink the water flowing from the feet of the Lord to my hearts content?

When shall I lie under a tree in the *dhāma* to gain strength from the Kalpataru and shake of lethargy, so that I may wander from place to place in the *dhāma*, singing aloud the names of 'Gaura Gadādhara' and 'Rādhā-Mādhava' shedding tears of love?

When shall I immediately on seeing a Vaiṣṇava fall at his feet, knowing him to be a friend in the heart of my heart and he will kindly teach me to sing the praises of the Lord?

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura was probably the first Vaiṣṇava who became restless regarding the fulfilment of Mahāprabhu's prophecy that His name would be preached in every nook and corner of the world and started working for it. It was towards this end that he revived the Viśva-vaiṣṇava-rāja-sabha, established about four hundred years back by Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī and started publishing *Sajjana-toṣaṇī*, a monthly magazine in Bengali, which dealt with subjects relating to the teachings of Mahāprabhu. Also towards this end he wrote in English *Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu: His Life and Precepts* and sent copies of the book to different universities and interested intellectuals in the West. Thus he securely laid down the foundation of an institution that was to grow with the efforts of his illustrious son Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Prabhupāda and his disciple Śrī A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swamī Prabhupāda into the gigantic Kalpataru of Śrī

Caitanya Mahāprabhu's teachings that continues to spread its branches all over the world.

Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda had to work under numerous limitations. He had important administrative duties to perform, he carried on his shoulders the responsibility of a large family, he had to fight throughout his life against ill-health, he had also to fight throughout his life against his opponents in the shape of the pseudo-vaiṣṇavas like the Āṇḍa Bāṇḍa, Karātabhāṇḍa and Sahajyās whom he condemned as a slur on society. The fact that inspite of these limitations he could accomplish so much by itself shows that he was a *Siddha-mahāpuruṣa*, who was specially chosen by Mahāprabhu to work for the fulfilment of His prophecy.

His writings and songs will continue to inspire people from generation to generation.

CHAPTER XVIII

ŚRĪ HARIBOLĀNANDA ṬHĀKURA
(Calcutta/Vārāṇasī)

It was sometime toward the end of the past century that people saw a curious drama enacted by a Bābājī in the crowded Chaurāṅgī Market of Calcutta. The Bābājī wore a cap made of the cast-away leaves on which the *prasāda* of Jegganātha had been served and held a conchshell in his hand. He went about from place to place blowing the conchshell and shouting, *Haribol, Haribol!* He held the feet of anyone, whom he met and started shouting, *Haribol, Haribol!* and did not leave him until he said *Haribol*. He happened to meet a *sāhaba* (Englishman). He held his feet and shouted *Haribol, Haribol!* The *sāhaba* rebuked, and kicked him. Still he clung to his feet and said *Haribol, Haribol!* *Sāhaba* thought he was mad. He lashed him with his stick. Even then he did not leave him and continued to shout *Haribol, Haribol!* A crowd gathered on the scene. In the meantime a Bengali came, who knew English and said to *sāhaba*, "Sir! This man is neither mad, nor a beggar. He does not want anything from you. He is a saint. He only wants you to take the name of the Lord. You say *Haribol!* and he would let you go. The *sāhaba* then apologized to the man and said *Haribol!* The crowd also shouted *Haribol!* The Bābājī blew his conch, as if to proclaim his victory over the *sāhaba*.

and went on shouting, *Haribol, Haribol!*

The Bābājī was the erst-while Navinacandra Bhaṭṭācārya. He was a householder and a teacher in a village school. After leading the life of householder for forty years he realised the futility of the world and decided to renounce it. But he did not know what to do and where to go in order to attain permanent peace and happiness. In utter despondency he ran to the temple of Mā Kālī of Kālīghaṭa in Calcutta. He lay before the temple for a number of days without food and drink, in the hope that the goddess would tell him what he should do. At the end the goddess asked him in a dream to go on pilgrimage to all the holy places of the country on foot.

In obedience to the goddess he went on foot to all the holy places one by one without any money or support from anyone, sometimes eating what he got in *bhikṣā* and sometimes fasting. It took him several years to go to all the places and he had to undergo many trials and tribulations on the way. But he did not find peace anywhere. Then again he went to Mother Kālī and expressed his grief. This time the goddess was pleased to give him *darśana* in person and say, "My son! In this age of Kali *Harināma* alone is true and fruitful. It is the only means for the attainment of the Lord. You always chant *Haribol Nāma-mantra* and fall at the feet of anyone you meet and ask him to chant *Haribol*."

Since then everyday he went on foot from his home in Baghbāzār to Kālīghaṭa for the *darśana* of Mā and asked whomsoever he met on the way, holding his feet with both of his hands, to say *Haribol*. Therefore people began to call him *Haribolānanda Ṭhākura*.

By constantly chanting 'Haribol' Haribolānanda Thākura's mind, body and soul became one with *Haribol*. He used to say to people, "You take me to the jungle and cut off my head. You will still hear my head chanting 'Haribol'." His *Haribol-kirtana* was so attractive, so maddening and intoxicating that men, women and children, who heard him chanting *Haribol* came automatically drawn to him and started chanting 'Haribol' with him. The children were particularly drawn to him. He endeared himself to them wherever he went. They did not want to leave him. He also behaved towards them like a child. He played and danced with them and gave them fruits and sweets to eat. They made themselves merry by chanting 'Haribol' with him and dancing as they chanted.

Once, when plague was rampant in Calcutta, Haribolānanda Thākura arranged with the financial help of his disciple Śrī Kṣetrapāl Mallik, for the *kirtana* of *Haribol* in every quarter, street and even bus or train of Calcutta. But Kṣetrapāl himself fell prey to the epidemic and there was no hope for his life. When Haribol Thākura came to know about it, he went to the Kālī temple and brought the *caranāmṛta* of Mother Kālī. He gave the *caranāmṛta* to the people attending upon Kṣetrapāl and said, "Give this *caranāmṛta* to Kṣetrapāl. He will sleep. When he gets up give him whatever he wants to eat." Immediately after taking the *caranāmṛta* Kṣetrapāl went to sleep. He slept for four or five hours. When he got up he was very hungry and asked for rice and pulse to eat. He ate and felt as healthy as he was ever before. After this episode Haribol Thākura became famous in Calcutta. Since he shunned fame, he left Calcutta and went to Vārāṇasi and began to live in Gaṇeśa Mohalla,

near Brahmakuṇḍa in a small *āśrama*, which he built there.

Before going to Vārāṇasi Haribolānanda Thākura stayed for sometime in a garden in Āgarapānā near Calcutta. There he adopted a special device for keeping his disciples engaged in *Harināma*. They had scarcity of land in that area. He asked them to dig earth from the bed of Gangā and pile it on the bank, saying *Haribol* all the time. They did this and within a short time the land space on the bank was extended by one *bighā*¹.

Haribol Thākura had tremendous spiritual power. Once, while the work of extending the beach was going on, one of his disciples said, "Thākura! After doing manual work throughout the day I now feel very hungry. Give me something to eat." Thākura mixed cow-dung with the earth of Gangā and gave it to him. As the disciple ate, his eyes gleamed. He said with great surprise, "Oh! I never enjoyed such a heavenly taste!" Haribol Thākura used to say to his disciples, "I am Rājā, because I can live by eating the clay of Gangā."

He had one special power, according to which he gave his disciples the names of companions of Mahāprabhu, such as Nityānanda, Advaita, Gadādhara, Śrīvāsa and charged them with the *bhāva* of the companion, whose name he gave. He could at will give *prema* to his disciples and withdraw it.

Many people, influenced by his spiritual powers, took initiation from him. Most of them came from the lower classes such as the barbers, the washermen, the carpenters, the Domas, etc.

¹ A *bighā* is equal to 20 *kathās*. A *kathā* is equal to 720 square feet.

Thākura was very strict with his disciples in the matter of *Nāma-japa* or *kirtana*. Even the disciples, who had a strong character and observed all the rules of good conduct, were chastised by him, if they neglected the Name. But he overlooked the faults of a disciple, who always chanted the Name though he came down heavily upon him as well if he committed an offense against a Vaiṣṇava or a devotee.

He initiated Śrī Haricarāṇa Dhāḍā of Uttarapāḍā and gave him the name Gadādhara Haribol. Gadādhara started chanting the Name in a loud voice. He chanted so loudly that the entire village could hear him. There was great attraction in his voice. Thākura loved Gadādhara very much. He always overlooked his faults. But once a devotee told him that he had behaved in a highly contemptible manner in his house. Immediately he called him and said, "From today I take away all your *bhāva-Bhakti*." In a way he renounced him. From that day he neither had any *bhāva-Bhakti*, nor any attraction in his voice.

One of the disciples of Haribolānanda Thākura was Śrī Vipina Candra Cattopādhyāya of Mākaḍadah. He was a great devotee and Thākura loved him more than his own self. Thākura visited him frequently. There were trees of coconut and betelnut in his garden. Thākura used to pick the twigs that fell from these trees and deliver them to him for cooking the *bhoga* of his dēties.

Vipina Bābū was so close to Haribolānanda and so free with him that he did not hesitate in asking him any question that came to his mind, nor did Haribol Thākura hesitate in answering it. They talked for hours about *Gaura-līlā* and *Kṛṣṇa-līlā*. From the way in which

the Thākura answered all kinds of questions relating to *Gaura-līlā* it appeared as if he had observed it directly or had participated in it. This raised a doubt in the mind of Vipina Bābū regarding his identity.

One day when Vipina Bābū was posted in Rāvjān as subjudge and Thākura was staying with him, he said to him, "Thākura! You will have to disclose your identity today. Tell me who you are."

Thākura said, "What? I am Haribol, what else?" But Vipina Bābū would not leave him so easily.

He continued to pester him with the question in different ways for three or four hours. But Thākura remained as reticent and secretive about his real self as ever. Then Vipina Bābū went in. He brought his revolver and pointing it towards himself said, "Look Thākura! Tell me at once who you are or I shoot myself and you commit the sin of causing the death of a Brahmin!" Thākura could not afford to lose his dear disciple. He had to throw off the mask and reveal himself. He said, "Look, I am no other than Śāntpurnātha Śrī Advaitācārya." Vipina immediately fell at the feet of Thākura and said, "If you are Śāntpurnātha then say, I bless Vipina Candra Cattopādhyāya, the second son of Śrī Śyāmacarāṇa Cattopādhyāya so that he may soon attain the lotus feet of Gaura." Thākura had to grant the prayer.

How much Thākura loved Vipina Candra is evident from the following portion of his letter written to a devotee after his death:

"There is no one now with whom I can talk about Kṛṣṇa. I travelled throughout India to find someone to whom I could open my heart and talk about Kṛṣṇa. After ceaseless search I found him. I could cool my heart suffering from the pangs of separation from Kṛṣṇa

only by talking to him. How could I live till now, if I had not found him?"

The following are some of Thākura's valuable sayings, culled from some of his letters, written to devotees:

1. I am the breath of Gaurahari and nothing else.
2. *Gaurāṅga-bhajana* is of several kinds. But chanting aloud the Name of the Lord is the best.
3. There is only one boat to ferry you across the ocean and that is the boat of faith.

4. Bhakta is *Bhagavān-viśeṣa* (special Bhagavān).

5. No *āśrama* is better than *grhastha-āśrama*.

It is good to remain in the household and do *bhajana* secretly. The mango, which is hidden among the leaves ripens, the one that is exposed is beaked by birds and spoiled.

6. My good lies in your devotion to the Lord, in nothing else.

7. In '*Haribol*' are included the names of Gaura, *gopī* Rādhā Śyāma. To chant '*Haribol*' is to chant all these names.

Haribolānanda Thākura had great love for Rāmadāsa Bābājī Mahārāja. This is evident from the fact that immediately after he had left his body he once came to Seal's lodge in Kalūtola, where Rāmadāsa lived. Outside the lodge he saw Advaita Dāsa Bābā. He said to him, "Where is Rāmadāsa?" Advaita Dāsa replied, "He is in. I am just going to call him." As soon as he went in Thākura disappeared. When Rāmadāsa came out, he began to weep not to see him. He understood that he had left his body and had come to let him know about the same.

CHAPTER XIX

ŚRĪ VIPINĀ BIHĀRĪ CAṬṬOPĀDHYĀYA

(Mākaḍadaha, Hāwaḍā)

In a village Mākaḍadaha of district Hāwaḍā, there lived Śrī Śyāmacaraṇa Caṭṭopādhyaḥ. He was a senior officer in the postal department and a simple hearted and good natured devotee. He used to do *kīrtana* everyday. When he did *kīrtana* with his friend Devendra Cakravartī, both became so inspired and ecstasied that they lay unconscious in *samādhi* for three or four hours. Some people of the neighbourhood, who thought that their *samādhi* was feigned, once touched their bodies with fire to test their *samādhi*. They were surprised to see that the fire did not have any effect upon them. Since then they began to respect them as great devotees.

The second son of Śrī Śyāmacaraṇa was Vipinā Bihārī Caṭṭopādhyaḥ. He was also simple-hearted, good natured and religious-minded, like his father. He had passed B.A. and Law and was a practising lawyer in the Hugali court. But he liked the company of *sādhus* and on account of his simplicity believed what the *sādhus* told him.

Once a *sādhū* told him that if he observed complete fast for 21 days, taking only the water of coconut at night, he would certainly have the *darśana* of goddess Kānapīśācī. He took the *mantra* from him and started *sādhana*. Fasting reduced him to a skeleton, still he did not give up the *sādhana*. On the twenty-first day,

when at dead of night, he was offering *bela*¹ leaves to the sacrificial fire the leaves started moving by themselves. He was frightened to see this. On account of fear he made some mistake in pronouncing the *mantra*. Therefore Karpasīśāci began to drag him. He shrieked aloud. His friend Madhusūdana Bhaṭṭācārya, who was sleeping in the verandah nearby came running. It was with great difficulty that he could make him recover from the shock. But since that time he began to have fever and jaundice and his teeth began to bleed. He lay on bed for a long time. At the end he became so weak that he could not even speak and the doctors declared that he would not survive. Waiting for death, one day he thought, "Death comes to everyone. But if it comes to me as the result of *sādhū-saṅga* (company of saints), people will keep away from *sādhū*s and that would be disastrous." In utter helplessness and anguish he cried aloud, "Prabhu! Prabhu! Have mercy on me!"

Prabhu heard his cry. A current ran through the spiritual world and touched the heart of *sādhū* Haribolānanda of Kāśī. He immediately sent four *sādhū*s to Vipina Bābū. They came and, standing at the door of his house, began to sing the following *kīrtana*:

"Premadātā Nitāi bola, Gaura

Hari Hari bola I

Nitāi enecha nāma, Gaura

Hari Hari bola II"

The *kīrtana* brought about unprecedented change in Vipina Bābū. Vipina Bābū, who could not turn side without the help of someone, suddenly sat up without anyone's help. Vipina Bābū who could not speak a word,

¹ Wood apple

called his mother and asked her to call the *sādhū*s. She went to the door and requested them to come in. She took them near Vipina Bābū's bed. Vipina Bābū lay prostrate before them and smeared his body with the dust of their feet. He kept them in his house for three days, served them well and took their *caranāmṛta*. Soon he regained his normal health. He had a new life. This might have been due to the power of *Harināma* or the *Vaiṣṇava-caranāmṛta*, but the root cause was the mercy of *sādhū* Haribolānanda Thākura. Vipina Bihārī's sincere concern for the bad name his death would have brought to the *sādhū*s, became the cause of their glorification, because it was the mercy of the *sādhū*s that pulled him out of the jaws of death.

This episode in the life of Vipina Bihārī reminds us that in this age it is not only difficult to obtain the Lord through *yaṇa*, the chances of the *yaṇa* proving disastrous, if some kind of mistake is committed in its performance, are great. The safest path is the path of Bhakti, on which one can walk even with eyes closed. In Bhakti the *Harināma-japa* or *Samkīrtana* is the most efficacious. There is not only no chance of *Harināma* causing any harm to the *sādhaka*, it has the power to avert any harm that may come to him for any other reason.

Ever since Vipina Bābū came to know of Haribolānanda Thākura from the *sādhū*s, whom he had sent, he became anxious to meet him. He went to Kāśī, enjoyed his company, and took initiation from him. He gave him the Gopāla *mantra* and the name Nityānanda.

One day, in order to test Nityānanda's faith in the guru, Thākura said to him, "I have financial difficulty. You go to the temple of Annapūrṇā and sit all day

in the line of beggars with a cloth spread before you for *bhikṣā*. Whatever you get in *bhikṣā*, you give me in the evening. He did likewise. He was staying in Kāśī in his father-in-law's house. When the people of his father-in-law's house went to the temple for *darśana*, they were very much enraged to see him sitting in the line of beggars for *bhikṣā*. But their reprimand had no effect on him. In the evening he brought the money, rice and pulses, etc. which he got in *bhikṣā* and offered everything to Gurudeva. Gurudeva kept the *bhikṣā* on his head and began to dance in ecstasy, because his disciple had given him adequate proof of *guru-niṣṭhā*² and humility, both of which are essential for success in *sādhana*.

After three months Thākura asked Nityānanda to go home. Nityānanda said, "Now I will not practise as a lawyer, because the lawyer had to do many things against his conscience." Thākura said, "Very well. Do not practise. Within seven days you will become *Munsif*."³

After his appointment as *Munsif* he had sufficient time for *bhajana*. He got up very early in the morning. As soon as he got up, he shouted 'Haribol!' This was a call to the devotees who participated in his *kirtana*. They came and the *kirtana* started. It went on from 4 a.m. to 7 a.m. His maddening *kirtana* and dance, his graceful movement of limbs in dance and the occasional shouts through which the *bhāva* in heart burst out during *kirtana* melted the hearts of even the non-devotees or those, who out of pride or ignorance ridiculed Bhakti. After *kirtana* he sat down to write judgement. Then

² Faith in the guru.

³ Subjudge.

after bath, deity-worship and *prasāda-sevā*, he went to the court. Again in the evening, after returning from the court he shouted 'Haribol!' The devotees came and *kirtana* began. The *kirtana* and *kathā* of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, etc., continued till 9 p.m. He followed this routine even at the time of illness and on the Ekadāśī days, when he observed complete fast and did not take even a drop of water.

Once, when he was reading the *kāzī-dalana-nīlā*⁴ in *Caitanya Bhāgavata*, he was so overwhelmed with *bhāva* that on the wall appeared for sometime the pictures of Mahāprabhu and His associates going to conquer the Kāzī. The devotees were lost in astonishment to see this.

Nityānanda used to put on the *tilaka* of Nityānanda *parivāra*⁵ since he was initiated by Haribolānanda Thākura. But when he was *Munsif* in Viṣṇupur (Cumilla), he was compelled, in a state of *bhāva*, by some invisible power to put on the *tilaka* of Gadādhara *parivāra*. No one could understand the mystery behind it. After sometime Śrīpāda Harimohana Śrīramaṇi Gosvāmī Prabhu of Gadādhara *parivāra* came to him without invitation and without any introduction. He was so much influenced by his *Gaura-niṣṭhā* that he had to take *Gaura-mantra* from him and join Gadādhara *parivāra*.

Nityānanda was transferred to different places as *Munsif*. Wherever he was transferred his *kirtana* continued as usual. He easily became the centre of attraction of the devotees and they came running morning and evening on hearing his *Haribol* and participated in *kirtana*. When

⁴ The subjugation of the Kāzī.

⁵ Line of disciple succession.

Nityānanda was posted in Baḍāila, two boys Kiraṇacandra Mitra and Girindra Ghoṣa became the most important members of his *kirtana* party. Even though chastised by their guardians, they did not leave his company. Girindra became so much attached to him that he gave up his studies and began to live with him as a member of his family. He went with him wherever he was transferred. Thus Girindra enjoyed his company continuously for 20 years. Nityānanda also loved him like his son. The bond of love between them was so thick that they were different only in body, one in soul. So it was natural that Girindra should have a premonition of Nityānanda's death. One day he saw in a dream that after two days he has left his body. He came weeping and fell at his feet. Nityānanda tried in every possible way to remove his anxiety and console him, but in vain. After two days, on the Kṛṣṇāṣṭhamī of the month of Māgha in the year 1923 at about 3 o'clock in the afternoon came his old friend Atula Campatī. He was at that time smoking *hukkā*. For a long time they talked happily. While the conversation was going on Atula Campatī said, "Look Vipina, you need not worry about your death. You have your wife and children, who will take care of you at the time of death. But I have no one, who may even give me a glass of water at that time." Immediately Vipina threw away the *hukkā* and said, "What do you say Campatī? Does the devotee of Nityānanda die like that? He says *Śrī Hari* and leaves the body." With this he left the body. Campatī used to say, "Vipina gave me a slap on my cheek and went, showing how the devotee dies."

CHAPTER XX

ŚRĪ VAMSĪDĀSA BĀBĀJĪ

(Navadvīpa)

It is said that the Western civilization is like a box of which the outside is studded with jewels, but inside is filled with rags, while the Indian civilization is like a box, of which the outside is wrapped in rags, but inside is filled with jewels. The Western people are interested in the exploration of the material world outside, and are never tired of beating their drum of achievements, while the Indian people are interested in the investigation and realization of the spiritual world inside and instead of beating the drum of their achievements, in public keep them hidden in their hearts. A traveller discovers an island or a continent. His name is recorded in history. A mountaineer climbs the Everest. He is applauded as the conqueror of the Himalayas. But saints, who conquer by their love the Creator and the Destroyer of the universe and subjugate Him to the extent of governing, commanding and reprimanding Him, pass unknown to the world. Vamsidāsa Bābā was one such saint. He would have remained unknown, if Śrī Haridāsa Dāsa Bābājī, who was close to him, had not written his short biography in *Gauḍīya*

Vaiṣṇavajivana, and Śrīpāda Haridāsa Gosvāmī¹ had not written about his reminiscences of him in his autobiography.

Vaiṣṇidāsa Bābājī was a *siddha-mahātmā* in the disciplic succession of Śrī Narottama Ṭhākura. The name of his *dīkṣā-guru* was Harilāl Vrajavāsī and the name of his *sannyāsa-guru* was Rāmānanda Vrajavāsī. But it was difficult to know that he was *siddha*, because he lived far away from the world in a solitary place on the bank of Gangā near Barāl Ghāta in Navadvīpa, as if he was renounced by the world, as an idiotic and worthless destitute. But the fact is that it is not the world that had renounced him, but he, who had renounced the world as worthless. He hardly had any worldly possessions. His only possessions were an old *kaupina*,² *karaṅga*³ and *kantha*.⁴ Once Śrīpāda Haridāsa Gosvāmī asked him why he did not wear *bahirvāsa*.⁵ He replied, "I live only with 'ka', which means *kaupina*, *karaṅga* and *kantha* I have nothing to do with 'ba' which means *bahirvāsa* or outer garment. *Bahirvāsa* brings relationship with the outer world and the people, who are *bahiraṅga*, that is those, who are attached to the outer world. My Gaura has asked me not to wear *bahirvāsa* and mix with people, who are *bahiraṅga*."

Vaiṣṇidāsa Bābājī lived in a world of his own.

¹ A descendant of the Tairthika Brahmana (pilgrim Brahmin) Śrī Satyabhama Upadhyaya, whose *bhoga* offered to his deity Gopāla, the child Gaurāṅga ate repeatedly and at the end appeared before him as Gopāla.

² A piece of cloth worn over privities.

³ A small pot.

⁴ A thin quilt made of rags patched together.

⁵ Loam-cloth or outer garment.

His world centered round his deities—Gaura-Gadādhara, Nityāi, Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and Gopāla. For the service of these deities he had two brass pots, some earthen pots, one plate, one glass, some small cups, *pañca-pātra*,⁶ bell and conch-shell and nothing else. Bābā passed day and night in the service of the deities and in sweet talks with Them. Early in the morning he went out from his *kutī* to collect flowers. Then he went for *bhikṣā*. He returned to the *kutī* about noon and made garlands from the flowers for each of the six deities. After that he started cutting vegetables. He washed each vegetable a number of times. Then he cleaned rice. He examined each grain of rice. If he found any grain from which the husk was not removed, he removed it with his own hand. He did everything slowly, contemplating all the time the *līlā* of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa or Gaura-Nityāi, and singing or talking to Them. It was only late in the evening that he could cook and offer *bhoga* to the deities. He had no consciousness of time. Morning and evening, day and night had no meaning for him. Almost the whole night he kept awake, talking and singing.

Once Śrīpāda Haridāsa Gosvāmī was surprised to see him cooking for the deities at about 9 a.m. He said to him, "Bābā! It would be fine, if you prepare *bhoga* for the deities like this in the morning everyday." He replied, "I do not know morning or evening. Am I their father's servant so to feed them at appointed hours? If They want to eat like that, let Them make Their own arrangements for cooking. Let Gadādhara cook for Gaura. Nityāi is *avadhūta*.⁷ He has no caste. He can

⁶ A metallic vessel used for the purpose of *pūjā*.

⁷ A saint who is above all norms and injunctions of the *śāstras*.

go and eat anywhere. I do not worry about my Gopāla. A milch-cow comes here everyday and gives Him milk. He can live on that. I have to worry about Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. For Them I will have to cook a little rice and vegetables. If I don't. They will go to Vṛndāvana and do *mādhukari*.⁸

Though Vamsidāsa Bābā was always engaged in the loving service of his deities with all his heart and soul, he was never satisfied with it.

Once Haridāsa Gosvāmī heard him saying to his deities sorrowfully with tears in his eyes, "I cannot serve You well. The whole day passes in doing *bhikṣā*, collecting flowers, cleaning utensils and cooking. Formerly I could do much. But now I have no *śakti*. What can I do?" He said this and began to weep. Haridāsa Gosvāmī said with folded hands, "I am a Gosvāmī and I have *Ṭhākura sevā* at my house. If I bring every day the materials for the service of your *Ṭhākuras*, will you accept?" He said "No." After sometime he added, "For my *Ṭhākura* I shall myself beg, collect provisions, and cook. Loving service of the *Ṭhākura* means service done by one's own self, not by any other person."

Haridāsa Gosvāmī started picking flowers for the deities of Vamsidāsa Bābā. This continued for sometime. Once he collected beautiful marigold flowers. He was tempted to offer them to his own deities. But he resisted the temptation. When he went to offer them to Vamsidāsa Bābā, he said, "You have collected them for your deities. So they must be offered to Them. I must myself collect flowers for my deities." From that day he again started picking flowers himself.

Vamsidāsa Bābā never locked the door of his

kutī, when he went out for *bhikṣā* or to bathe in the Gangā. If someone asked him why he did not lock the *kutī*, he said, "If the owner of the house Himself does not keep a watch and has a soft corner for the thief, what is the use of locking the house? I do not even keep the keys of the lock with me. The lock has three keys. All the three are with the three boys. One is with Gaura, one with Nitāi and one with Gadādhara." After entrusting the lock and the keys to the three boys, Bābā used to be free from anxiety. If while he was out a cow entered the *kutī* and turned everything topsyturvy, he would be angry with the boys. If some one stole something from the *kutī* he would say "Gaura has a soft corner for Nadiyavāsīs, the residents of His own *Dhāma*. Therefore He gives things away to them. I am after all an outsider." Once a gold necklace, given by someone to Gaura, was stolen, when he had gone out for *bhikṣā*. On returning to the *kutī* he kept on scolding Gaura and asking Him whom He had given away the necklace, for about two hours. Towards the evening he got a hint. He then went to the house of the thief and asked him for the necklace. The thief pushed him down the verandah of his house. He was hurt. But he did not say anything. But how could Gaura tolerate this? The thief soon died as well as all the other members of his family.⁹

Once Bābā had to punish Gaura-Nitāi for Their connivance in a theft. The two brass-pots, in which Bābā used to cook for Gaura-Nitāi, were stolen. How could this happen without the connivance of Gaura-Nitāi? So They were punished. Bābā scolded Them and did not

⁸ Haridāsa Gosvāmī, p. 285

⁹ Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Jīvana, II, p. 328

give Them anything to eat that day The punishment had its effect The next day someone came quietly and delivered one of those pots. Bābā said, "This small pot is Nitāi's He will be fed today If Gaura wants to eat, He must also bring His pot" Bābā always did what he said He cooked and offered *bhoga* to Nitāi. Gaura drew a long face as He kept looking at Nitāi eating. In the meantime another man came and delivered the other pot Bābā then cooked in that pot and offered *bhoga* to Gaura When Gaura also had eaten, he said with tears in his eyes, "Do I ever want to punish You? But both of You are so naughty that You must always tease me. You do not know that I have now become old and cannot bear it all. What can I do?"

Once Bābā said to Handāsa Gosvāmī, "Gaura once desired to wear garland of *campe*¹⁰ flowers. I went to the garden of Roy Mahāśaya and climbed a *campe* tree to pluck flowers. At that time also Gaura could not remain without teasing me. He made me fall from the tree. I was hurt. Even then I brought the flowers, knit them together into garlands and offered them to Gaura-Nitāi, because They like the *campe* flowers so much. Even though I serve These boys so much, They always tease me. What can I do? I am so attached to Them that I cannot also leave Them."

Bābā was truly so attached to Gaura-Nitāi that he could not leave Them. Once he thought of going to Vrndāvana He started on foot. He had only gone upto Sulatanaganja, when he remembered Gaura-Nitāi so much that he had to return to Navadvīpa.

In spite of all that Gaura-Nitāi did to tease Bābā,

¹⁰ A fragrant yellow flower

They were even more attached to him than he was attached to Them. They could not bear his separation even for a short while. Once Bābā was late in returning from *mādhukarī* Gaura-Nitāi were filled with rage. They expressed Their resentment by breaking the earthen pots and scattering rice, pulses, ghee and oil all round in the *kutī*. When Bābā returned he was aghast to see everything lying scattered on the floor. Mentioning this to Handāsa Gosvāmī Bābā once said, "Gaura used to tease His mother like this in His childhood. Even now His nature is the same. It was alright, if He teased His mother. She enjoyed it. But I am an old man and a destitute. Does it behoove Him to tease me like this? This *brāmana-pūta* (son of a Brahmin) is not a *pūta* (son) but a *bhūta* (ghost), who will only tease and tease. I had gone for *bhikṣā* only for His sake. What if I returned a bit late?"

Once during the winter season Handāsa Gosvāmī saw that Bābā's Bāla-gopāla was without clothes. He said to him, "Bābā! How is it that Gopāla is without clothes?" Bābā replied, "Gopāla has cultivated a friendship with the mice. He gives His clothes to His friends. What can I do?"

Gosvāmī said, "Gopāla is a child. Children often do like that. You give Him other clothes."

"Let Him bring clothes Himself from wherever He can, otherwise let Him suffer cold. What can I do? Let Him reap as He sows."

All this may sound strange to a *sādhaka*. "Did Vamsidāsa Bābājī not commit an offence by making his deities from time to time helpless targets of his insolent and wrathful behaviour?" We would say, Vamsidāsa Bābā had risen above the level, in which offense is offense.

to the level in which offense is not offense but an expression of deep intimacy and love, the level in which love and love alone governs both the deity and His devotee and accounts for all their actions, even those that outwardly seem to be offensive. Bābā was no more a *sādhaka*. He had become *siddha* and he was now enjoying the fruits of *sādhana*. No one ever saw Bābā wearing a *tilaka* on his forehead, no one ever saw him counting beads. The deities to him were no more objects of worship but objects of love, which recognized no formalities, no rules or regulations imposed by the *śāstras* or anyone else.

It is difficult to understand what *bhāva* Vaiṣṇāśa Bābā had towards Gaura. It sometimes appeared to be *sakhya* (friendly), sometimes *vātsalya* (parental) and sometimes *madhura* like that of a *Nadīyā-nāgarī* (lady of Nadīyā) towards Gaurāṅga as *Nadīyā-nāgarī* (an attractive citizen of Nadīyā). If it was basically *madhura*, it is easy to understand that he sometimes exhibited *vātsalya-bhāva* towards Him and sometimes *sakhya*, because *madhura-bhāva* includes all other *bhāvas*. According to Haridāśa Gosvāmī his *bhāva* was of *Nadīyā-nāgarī* type, because he used to compose songs of this *bhāva* and sing. He has quoted some of these songs. Two of them are reproduced below:

*'kena gīyā chilāma gaṅgā-tīre o nāgarī
nyāne katākṣa bāne gaura kaila mana churī
āmi ekhana ki kari o nāgarī ki kari //*

—O Nāgarī! How I repent having gone to the bank of Gaṅgā

Gaura cast a side long glance at me and stole my heart.

What shall I do now, O Nāgarī! What shall I do?"

*'bala go nāgarī gaura kallena ki //
grha gela kula gela mana kela curī //
sajanī! ekhana āmi ki kari //*
*nayāna kone, kāne kāne gaura kallena ki //
āmi je prāṇa mari gaura kallena ki //*
—Tell me O Nāgarī what Gaura has done to me,
He winked and whispered and did,
I do not know what to me.
O Sakhī! Now I know not what to do,
Life is running out of me. O! What has Gaura
done to me?"

Towards the end of his life Bābā once went to his birth place Majitpur in district Maymansinha. He carried the deities with him. On the way he neither ate, nor slept, nor passed stool or urine.¹¹ On reaching Majitpur he stayed in a dilapidated temple. After that he went to Vṛndāvana and Puri. In Vṛndāvana he stayed on the bank of Yamunā, in Puri on the bank of Narenda Sarovara. He never went inside a temple for *darsana*. During these travels the *sādhus* of the Gauḍīya Māṭha rendered great service to him.

Nothing is known about Baba's life as a householder, except that he was married at an early age and his son Haracandra was nine or ten years old when he renounced the world. He went to Navadvipa about the year 1906. The author once tried to see him in 1932, but could not, because the door of his *kutī* was closed though he could hear him talking to the deities in Maymansinha dialect. He left the world in 1944.

¹¹ Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Jīvana, II, p. 332

CHAPTER XXI

ŚRĪ PRĀṆAGOPĀLA GOSVĀMĪ

(Navadvīpa)

Śrī Prāṇagopāla Gosvāmī was a descendant of Nityānanda Prabhu. He was born in village Brituni of district Dhākā in East Bengal. He was only four years old when his father Śrī Alakamohana Gosvāmī died. Śrī Harendra Kumāra Roy, a disciple of his family took him to his village Pācunya of Fandpur district to look after him and his education. He admitted him in a *toila*. After finishing his education there at the age of sixteen, he went to Kholābānī and studied Mugdhabodha Vyākaraṇa from Śrī Rajanibhanta Bhaṭṭācārya for two years. Then he went to Calcutta and continued his studies under Śrī Gokulacānd Gosvāmī. At that time he was so poor that he could not even afford a lamp for his studies. He used to read in the gaslight on the street. Śrī Gokulacānd Gosvāmī was so pleased with his dedication to studies and the brilliance of his mind that he used to say, "This boy will preserve my name."

After Prāṇagopāla became proficient in different branches of Sanskrit learning, he started delivering discourses on *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. He was ideally equipped for this, not primarily because of his learning, but because of his Bhakti. He was born with such strong *samsakāras* of Bhakti that once at the age of eleven when he heard a lady singing a song describing the beauty of Kṛṣṇa,

he had the vision of Kṛṣṇa playing on His flute and fell senseless on the ground.

His discourses were so powerful that no one who heard him even once could remain unaffected. Once he was discoursing on *Bhāgavatam* in village Ābādpur of Maimansinha. Śrī Ānandakṣora Gosvāmī of that village was so impressed by his discourses that he decided to marry his daughter Sarojinī with him. His relations opposed this, because Prāṇagopāla was poor. But he did not listen to them. Sarojinī was married to him.

Prāṇagopāla went to Navadvīpa with his wife and began to live there in a rented house. He started *Bhāgavatam-pāṭha* in Navadvīpa. Śrī Govinda Dāsa Bābājī of Vaiṣṇavapādā in Navadvīpa was so much influenced by his *pāṭha* that he decided to renounce everything and go to Vṛndāvana for doing *bhajana*. He gave him the Śrī Vighraha of Śrī Rādhā-Madanamohana worshipped by him, his house, land and everything and went to Vṛndāvana. Since then Prāṇagopāla lived in that house and served Rādhā-Madanamohana with all his heart and soul.

Every year at the time of *Niyama-sevā* Prāṇagopāla went to Dhākā for a month long *Bhāgavatam-pāṭha*. People came from distant places to listen to his *pāṭha* and were ecstasised to see his dance and *kīrtana* which he was accustomed to do after the *pāṭha*.

He also had to go to other places for *pāṭha*. Once when he was doing *pāṭha* at the house of landlord Kala Saheb in Cumilla, a very strange thing happened. Prāṇagopāla was speaking with deep emotion and the listeners were shedding tears. But a highly placed and self-conceited man was repeatedly interrupting by asking baseless questions, which caused much annoyance to him and the audience. Once Prāṇagopāla said to him

in a sharp tone, "Keep quiet for some time." From that time the man lost his speech. In spite of all his efforts he could not utter even a single letter. Prāṇagopāla touched his forehead with his bag of beads for counting *Harināma* and his speech was restored.

Once Prāṇagopāla went to Fatehābād for *Bhāgavata-pāṭha*. At that time in a nearby village named Mekala a strange thing happened. There lived in that village a rich man whose name was Govinda Sāhā. Outside his house was a temple constructed by his ancestors. There was no proper arrangement for the service of the deities in the temple. Near about the temple people often saw a ghost. One day in the evening Govinda Sāhā heard the shriek of a neighbour. He ran up to him and asked, "What happened?" He said, "I saw a shadowy figure enter the temple. As soon as it entered, the door automatically closed." Sāhā picked courage and asked the ghost from outside the temple, "Who are you? Why do you loiter about my house?" The ghost replied in nasal tone, "I am one of your ancestors. Listen. I have good news for you. Śrīpāda Prāṇagopāla Gosvāmī has come to Fatehābād. You take *dikṣā* from him and be blest. Bring his *adharāmṛta* and offer it to me by name." Govinda Sāhā did likewise. After that the ghost was never seen there.

Once when Śrīpāda Prāṇagopāla was delivering *Bhāgavata-pāṭha* at the palace of Rājā Nandī Mahāśaya of Kāśimbāzār, Śrī Narottama Ṭhākura appeared to him in a dream at night and invited him for *pāṭha* in Khetuḍī state, of which he was the heir-apparent in his manifest life.

The Panditas of Bengal were so much impressed by the learning and the *pāṭha* of Prāṇagopāla that they honoured him with the title 'Siddhānta Ratna.'

Prāṇagopāla was *siddha* in *līlā-smaraṇa*.¹ This is proved by the following excerpt from the biography of Kāminī Kumāra Ghoṣa, a *siddha-mahātmā* included in *Vraja-Ke-bhakte*.

"Śrīpāda Prāṇagopāla had great regard for Kāminī Bābū. Both addressed each other as 'Dādā.' Though both lived far from each other, they often found themselves together in *līlā-smaraṇa*. Some times both enjoyed the same *līlā* and saw each other in his *manjari* form; they confirmed this by writing letters to each other."²

Even while sleeping at night Prāṇagopāla was often heard saying something which indicated that he was having *līlā-darśana*. Once he was heard saying, "O *Sakhī!* Give me my fan. Don't you see that both of Them (Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa) are sweating?" This was natural, because according to the *siddha-pranālī* he was assigned the service of fanning the Divine Couple by Gurudeva.

In 1911 Prāṇagopāla went to Vṛndāvana. The people of Vṛndāvana got the much longed for opportunity of listening to his *pāṭha-kīrtana*, for which they had been waiting so long. They took him from the station to his own Lakṣmī Kāntakunja in Gopinātha Bāzār in a procession performing *kīrtana* with fourteen *mṛdangas* and *karatālas*. The *pāṭha* started from the next day in the temple of Govindaḍī. All the *siddha-mahātmās* of that time including Pandita Rāmākṛṣṇa Dāsa Bābū, Jagadīśa Dāsa Bābū, Mādhava Dāsa Bābū, Śrī Kṛṣṇapada Dāsa Bābū, Gaurāṅga Dāsa Bābū and Rājaraṣi Banamālī Rai attended his *pāṭha*. In his *pāṭha* when he described

¹ Contemplation of divine *līlā*.

² *Vraja-ke-bhakte*, by O.B.L. Kapoor, p. 132

the *Vraja-līlā*, it appeared as if the *līlā* had become manifest. The people, who listened were stormed with *bhāva*. Tears, tremor and horripilation, etc., repeatedly appeared on their bodies. Prāṇagopāla himself had great capacity for controlling his *bhāva*. But sometimes he could not. He had to close the *pāṭha* and apologize to the listeners. He went home and left his mind to swim freely in the ocean of *bhāva* and enjoy *Kṛṣṇa-līlā*. But once he was drowned so deep into it that the whole night, while sleeping, he continued to repeat the *śloka*s of *Gopī-gītā*. The next morning when his sons, Śrī Yadugopāla Gosvāmī and Śrī Nandagopāla Gosvāmī asked him about it, he looked at them with surprise and said, "What do you say? I cannot make out anything."

From Vṛndāvana Prāṇagopāla went to Rādhākunḍa. Every morning before sunrise he circumambulated Rādhākunḍa along with his companions. One day the companions who were talking among themselves, lagged behind and Prāṇagopāla went out of sight. After some time they heard him shouting, "O! Come and see!" They ran up to him and saw that he was lying senseless on the ground. The place was radiant with a supernatural blue light and pervaded by a supernatural smell. They took him in unconscious state to the Rājābādi of Rājārṣi Banamālī Roy, where he was staying. After a long time, when he regained consciousness, he looked at them with tearful eyes and said, "O! Tell me where He has gone, leaving me alone in darkness." He continued to weep and cry and rave like one who had gone mad. He came to his own after the companions sang *Harināma* to him for a long time.

Once Prāṇagopāla had to go to Pātānā at the

invitation of the famous barrister Śrī P.R. Dāsa. Dāsa said to him, "People criticize the *cira-harana-līlā*³ of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* as erotic. I would like to hear your *pāṭha* on the same." Prāṇagopāla spoke on that *līlā* and related subjects for a month. Śrī Dāsa was so much influenced that at the end of the *pāṭha* he fell at Prāṇagopāla's feet and requested with tears in his eyes for *dikṣā*. He gave him *dikṣā*. After *dikṣā* there was a complete change in his style of life. P.R. Dāsa, who used to live in Western style and eat non-vegetarian food, cooked by a Mohammedan cook, began to wear *tilaka* and *kañṭhi* and eat vegetarian food, offered to the deities of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, whom he started worshipping and serving with his own hands.

Once Prāṇagopāla was doing *Bhāgavata-pāṭha* at the house of Raibahādur Satish Caudhari in Calcutta. A gentleman who was listening to the *pāṭha* was incessantly shedding tears. After the *pāṭha* Śrī Yogendra Mahāśaya, the famous Kavirāja of Calcutta, brought him to Prāṇagopāla and said, "This is the famous Bhūpena Basu, member of British Parliament. Just now he is feeling much aggrieved on account of the death of his son. I have brought him to you so that you may show mercy on him and remove his suffering. Prāṇagopāla said, "Bābā! *Kṛṣṇa-kathā*⁴ is the only remedy for all kinds of affliction. You listen to *Kṛṣṇa-kathā* with faith. Your grief will certainly disappear and peace will reign in your heart." Bhūpen Bābū said with folded hands and tears in his eyes, "Prāṇagopāla! Your own heart is the limitless ocean

3 The *līlā* in which Kṛṣṇa stole the clothes of the *gopīs* bathing naked in Yamunā.

4 Talks about Kṛṣṇa.

of the nectar of *Kṛṣṇa-kathā* "You may yourself kindly bless me with that nectar."

Prāṇagopāla's *pāṭha* was arranged in a spacious hall in the house of Bhūpena Bābū. The *pāṭha* was attended by all the prominent people of Calcutta. In that *pāṭha* Prāṇagopāla dwelt at length on the nature of worldly life. He spoke so well that even the atheists and the materialists were convinced that the things of this world and its relationships were all transitory, shadowy and painful. Real happiness lay only at the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa. He made them experience it themselves to some extent through his dance and *kīrtana* at the end of the *pāṭha* everyday. His wonderful dance and *kīrtana* released such current of *bhāva* and *Bhakti* that even the people wearing pant and tie began to sing and dance and roll on the ground in ecstasy. At the conclusion of the *pāṭha* Bhuvana Mohana Bābū said to Prāṇagopāla, "Gosvāmīji! For a number of days I have been thinking that the death of my own son has been a blessing in disguise. It is on account of his death that I have been blessed by your company and my house has been turned into Naimiṣāranya, where Śrī Śukadeva discoursed on *Bhāgavatam*. By your grace not only my suffering is gone, I am ashamed to think that I have unnecessarily been feeling bereaved on account of the death of some one with whom I had no relation at all." On hearing this Prāṇagopāla extended both of his arms and clasped him close to his heart. Each bathed the other with the tears flowing from his eyes on account of exuberance of love and joy.

The *pāṭha* lasted for 20 days. After the termination of *pāṭha nagara-kīrtana* was done. During *nagara-kīrtana* Bhuvana Bābū walked barefooted with Prāṇagopāla and

danced all along with *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* on his head and tears constantly streaming out of his eyes. The people who saw him said to each other, "We never saw such a miracle before. Indeed! What cannot happen as the result of even a moment's company of a saint like Prāṇagopāla!"

Prāṇagopāla was at that time staying in Calcutta at no. 60 Grey Street. Visitors came to him from morning till evening. They came to him with their problems and doubts and went back relieved and satisfied. But Prāṇagopāla himself was worried at that time on account of the illness of his daughter Gaurabhāvanī Devī. She was seriously ill. No one could say when she would breathe her last. One day Prāṇagopāla was wondering what could be the cause of her illness. Early in the morning that day he entered his room, closed the door and sat down to do *japa* and *dhyāna* (meditation) as usual. At that time there appeared before him Śrī Śaṅsāra Deva (god Saturn) seated on the back of Śakuna, a bird, which he used as his *vāhana*.⁵ He asked Prāṇagopāla to open his eyes. As he opened his eyes, he was surprised to see him. He made obeisance to him. Śaṅsāra Deva said, "I am the cause of your anxiety. I know that the juice comes out of sugarcane only when it is thrashed and twisted. You arrange for my *pūjā* and everything will be allright."

Prāṇagopāla was at a fix. He said with folded hands, "Deva! Your command puts me in a quandary, because I have faith in Kṛṣṇa and worship Him and no one else."

Śaṅsāra Deva laughed and said, "I also have

⁵ Conveyance

faith in Kṛṣṇa. I have caused pain to you through your daughter only with the purpose of getting the *caranāmṛta* of the deities you worship, which we gods cannot enjoy unless Their devotees offer it to us. In your festivals you invite and feed the Vaiṣṇavas, the Brahmins and even the beggars. You do not feel that you commit an offense. You feel that you commit an offense only when you invite us. Now if you want your daughter to recover, do what I say. Look closely at this form of mine. Have an image made like this by a sculptor. Then invoke me and offer *prasāda* to me. And listen, I love *Harināma* very much. You count a fixed number of *Harināma* on beads every day. After completing that number count one bead for me. Your daughter will be allright."

Prāṇagopāla thought he could do that without in any way compromising his faith in Kṛṣṇa. But he said, "If I do what you say, how shall I know that you came, took the *prasāda* and went?"

Śaṇiścara Deva replied, "It is not possible for me to appear before everyone. But when you will offer *prasāda*, my *vāhana* will come and eat *prasāda* before all."

Prāṇagopāla opened the door of his room after completing *japa*. Many people had been waiting for a long time for his *darśana* in the verandah. He told them about the arrival of Śaṇiścara Deva and his command. Then he said, "Look, today is Śaṇiścara (Saturday). Today I shall arrange for the *pūjā* of Śaṇiścara Deva in a festival and offer *prasāda* to him. Inform all my disciples and friends and ask them to be present at the time of *pūjā*. At that time they will have the *darśana* of the *vāhana* of Śaṇiścara Deva."

An image of Śaṇiścara Deva was quickly prepared.

Prāṇagopāla's disciple Pandita Viśveśvara Bhaṭṭācārya was asked to make all the arrangements for *pūjā*. As soon as *pūjā* was done and Śaṇiścara Deva was invoked for taking *prasāda*, a big bird of queer shape came from somewhere and sat fearlessly before the altar of the deities. Prāṇagopāla asked Viśveśvara Bhaṭṭācārya to offer *prasāda* to it. The bird ate rice, pulses, vegetables, sweets, fruits and everything. It did not leave even a drop of water kept for drinking. After eating it first flew and sat on the railing of the second story of the house. From there it turned round and saw everything and then unfurled its wings and disappeared.

Afterwards Prāṇagopāla said to the devotees in a serious tone, "Since this morning, when Śaṇiścara Deva told me about his faith in *Harināma* my own faith in *Harināma* has very much increased."

After this episode not only was Gaurabhāvinī Devī completely cured, the faith of Prāṇagopāla's devotees in *Harināma* and in Prāṇagopāla also increased.

Prāṇagopāla's life is full of supernatural happenings of this kind. It is not possible to narrate all. We shall state only two more to indicate the level of his spiritual attainment.

In 1927 he was going to Vṛndāvana with his companions in a reserved compartment of Toofan Express. At 9 p.m. he lay down on a berth. His disciples began to massage his feet. Gopīmohana Cakravartī and Navadvīpa Candra Ghōṣa began to talk with him about the programme in Vṛndāvana. Slowly he went into sleep. Everyone went and lay down on his berth. After some time Prāṇagopāla got up with a start. He asked a disciple to call Navadvīpa Candra Ghōṣa. As soon as he came he said, "Look, tell everyone that he should get up before 3 a.m. and do

Harināma No one must leave this compartment. Those who do not follow my instructions will come to grief." All followed the instructions except two. Prāṇagopāla's wife continued to sleep after 3 a.m. and Śrī Gopimohana Cakravartī went and sat in another compartment. A few minutes after 3 a.m. Prāṇagopāla shouted 'Jai Nītāi!'. Simultaneously was heard a terrible sound of collision followed by shrieks of thousands of people. All were stunned and frightened. Shortly after it was known that a goods train had collided with their train. No one in the train had escaped unhurt. But what a surprise! Prāṇagopāla's compartment had been detached from the train and stationed on another line. The coach behind it had dovetailed into the coach in front like a match-box! None of the companions of Prāṇagopāla was hurt except the two persons, who had not followed his instruction.

Once Prāṇagopāla was going to Dhākā with his family. During those days in order to go to Dhākā one had to leave the train at Goyaland Station and board a steamer. The steamer used to leave sometime after the arrival of the train. Prāṇagopāla thought that during the interval he could do his morning worship. So he sat down to worship. When the time came for the steamer to start, everyone boarded it, but Prāṇagopāla remained worshipping still. No one had the courage to go and tell him that the steamer was about to leave. At last Śrī Dvīgendra Kāvyaīrtha took courage. He went and said, "Prāṇagopāla! The steamer is going to leave." Still he sat calm and composed in worship. The ladder of the steamer was lifted, the anchor raised, the siren sounded and the engine started. But strange! The engine was working, yet the steamer was not moving. Howsoever

much the captain tried, the steamer did not move. The captain was at his wit's end. He did not know what to do. In the mean time Prāṇagopāla completed his worship. He said to Dvīgendra Pandita, "O Dvīgendra! Has the steamer gone? How could it go until I had finished worship? Ask the captain to lower the ladder." The ladder was lowered at the instance of Prāṇagopāla's companions. As soon as Prāṇagopāla boarded the steamer it started. The captain, who was Mohammedan, lay down at the feet of Prāṇagopāla thinking that he was a *pīra*.*

Rādhākūṇḍa is the holiest place of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. It was discovered by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Since then it has been under the possession of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. But at that time its condition was deplorable. It had not been cleaned for hundred years. Its water had become so muddy that it was not possible to take even a few drops of it as *caranāmṛta*. Prāṇagopāla brought tears in his eyes to see it. He determined to have it cleaned and renovated. But this was a stupendous task. It involved huge expenditure. It was, however, his nature not to be deterred by any difficulties howsoever great, once he undertook to do a work. He started begging from door to door. He collected some money with his own efforts and the efforts of Śrī Rāmadāsa Bābājī Mahārāja. Some money was collected and the work started. At that time the Rājā of Āwāgarh claimed that Rādhākūṇḍa, Syāmakūṇḍa and the adjoining lands belonged to him. The matter was taken to the court. The work was stopped. The case was fought in the lower court and the High Court. In the High Court Prāṇagopāla's disciple

* Prophet.

barister P.R. Dāsa fought the case on behalf of the Gaudiya. The case was won and the work restarted. But the money that was collected was spent in seven months. Major part of the work was yet to be done. Prāṇagopāla then asked his wealthy disciple Śrī Pṛyānātha Paul to undertake the responsibility of completing the work. He first expressed his inability to do it. But the same night Rādhārāṇī reprimanded him for disobeying the guru. The next day he apologized to the guru and took upon himself the responsibility of completing the work. If Rādhārāṇī had not intervened, it would have been difficult to complete the work. But was it possible for Her not to intervene? How could She remain indifferent to the work which was undertaken by Her own devotee for Her own service? The work was completed with the financial assistance of Śrī Pṛyānātha Paul.

Prāṇagopāla's contribution to *kīrtana* also is worth mentioning. He trained all the important *kīrtanīyas*⁷ of his time. He heard their *kīrtana* and corrected it where it ran counter to *rāsa-siddhanta* (the philosophy of *rāsa*), changed the language where necessary and taught them the appropriate tune and dance by himself singing and dancing. The *līlā-kīrtanas* in vogue at that time related to *Kṛṣṇa-līlā*. He introduced *līlā-kīrtanas* pertaining to *Gaura-līlā*, by himself composing songs and training the *kīrtanīyas* to sing them and dance in the manner appropriate to the *bhāva* of the songs.

Prāṇagopāla's biggest contribution was to Gaudiya Vaiṣṇava literature. He translated Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī's *Bhagavata Samdarbha*, *Pṛitī Samdarbha*, *Kṛṣṇa Samdarbha*, *Bhakti Samdarbha* and other works in simple

⁷ *Kīrtana* singers, specially those, who sing *līlā-kīrtana*

Bengali. He also translated in Bengali Viśvanātha Cakravartipāda's *Bhaktirasamṛta-sindhubindu*, *Bhagavatāmṛtakanā*, *Ujjvalanīlamanī-kīrtana*, *Rāgavartna-candrikā* and other works. Besides he wrote a commentary on Caitanya Caritāmṛta. It is surprising that inspite his preoccupation with so many other things, he could find time and energy to do this.

Śrīpāda Prāṇagopāla also set the example of an ideal *grhastha* (householder). The head of his family was Madanamohana, the deity he worshipped. He loved the other members of the family just as much as they loved Madanamohana. Everything that he possessed was for Madanamohana and His devotees. He did not try to collect for his family. This was against his principle. Once one of his lady disciples wanted to donate to him her palatial building. He did not accept it. On her insistence he said, "By accepting your palatial building I do not want to lose my children. They will develop attachment to it and their attachment to Madanamohana will decrease." What he meant was that his relation with them was due to their relation with Madanamohana. If they ceased to have relation with Madanamohana, their relation with him also would cease. Śrīpāda Prāṇagopāla did not leave anything for his family. He got plenty of money from the devotees. But as soon as money came, he became restless to spend it. He either spent it on some festival of Madanamohana or in the service of devotees. He did not feel at ease until he had spent it.

Śrīpāda Prāṇagopāla Gosvāmī appeared on the spiritual firmament as a powerful luminary in 1876 and disappeared in 1941 after shedding his light all round as an ideal devotee, *ācārya*, scholar, and householder.

CHAPTER XXII

ŚRĪLA BHAKTISIDDHĀNTA SARASVATĪ
GOSVĀMĪ PRABHUPĀDA
(Calcutta)

It was August 1931. A young man, working as research scholar in the philosophy department of the University of Allahabad, who had studied, along with the other systems of Indian and Western philosophy, the Advaitic philosophy of Śankarācārya, had come to believe that the philosophy of Śankarācārya was the best, that the formless, attributeless Brahma alone was real and every thing else was false. Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Nṛsiṅha, and the other incarnations, the finite self and the world did not exist. They were all the products of Māyā or ignorance. The finite self was Brahma, but regarded itself as *jīva* only on account of ignorance.

The young man happened to meet a Vaiṣṇava *sannyāsi* named Śrī Gīrī Mahārāja. Gīrī Mahārāja tried to explain to him that the Advaitavāda, which regarded the Śrī Viṅgha of Bhagavān as illusion, was itself a big illusion. But the Svāmī could not for long hold his own before the sharp arguments of the young man, who was well versed in Śankara Vedānta. He had to acknowledge that he could not satisfactorily counter his arguments. But he said that if he met his Guru Mahārāja, who was well versed in the *śāstras* and a *siddha* saint, he would certainly be able to pull him out of what

he called, the 'mire of Māyāvāda.' He also said that the Guru Mahārāja lived in Calcutta but was about to come to Allahabad in connection with the opening ceremony of a Maṭha.

The young man waited anxiously for his arrival, not so much because he wanted to reexamine his stance in respect of Advaitism in the light of what he said, but because he took it as an opportunity to prove, by defeating a famous theologian like him in argument, that Śankara's philosophy was impregnable, and also, subconsciously perhaps, to fan his own vanity that he could not be vanquished in argument, at least in so far as Advaitism was concerned.

The saint arrived. He stayed in the house of one Mr. De in the New Barrānā Colony. Gīrī Mahārāja fixed an appointment with him for the young man.

When the young man arrived, he was first introduced to a band of *Triṇḍī sannyāsīs*,¹ who had come with the saint—Bon Mahārāja, Purī Mahārāja, Nemī Mahārāja, Bhāraṇī Mahārāja and others. Bhāraṇī Mahārāja had a tall and bulky figure and an imposing personality. He took the young man aside and quoting *ślokas* from the *śāstras*, impressed upon him that in his talks with the saint he should have an open mind but a submissive attitude. The young man thought that perhaps Gīrī Mahārāja had told everyone about his argumentative nature and they thought that he needed that kind of advice before his meeting with the saint.

The young man was then asked to wait in a room, adjoining the one in which the saint lived. There

¹ Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Sannyāsīs

was a door between the two. After some time the door opened and the young man saw a *mahāpuruṣa*, with a tall figure and a divine lustre on his face, appearing before him and looking at him with compassionate eyes.

The young man made obeisance to him. He said, "Daso'smi" (I am your servant) and sat down. The young man had come prepared to ask him a number of questions regarding the nature of Brahma, the *jīva* and the relationship between them. But without giving him a chance to speak the *mahāpuruṣa* began to answer his questions. He was grave and his speech was forceful. He went on speaking. During his speech on philosophical subjects he slipped into subjects like Kṛṣṇa. His form, attributes, *līlā* and *dhāma*. While speaking on these subjects he got so inspired and overwhelmed with *bhāva* that the young man could not remain unaffected. He listened like one spellbound. He felt that he was transported into the celestial *Vraja-dhāma* and was enjoying the beauty of the *dhāma* and *Kṛṣṇa-līlā*, as it was being unfolded to him. This was to him a new experience. It was so delightful and captivating that he forgot all about himself and his philosophy. His thought was stilled, his eyes were closed and he was drinking deep of the ambrosia that was being poured into his ears. Suddenly the ambrosial talks ceased and the drama ended. He opened his eyes and saw that the saint was not there. The saint was so ecstasised that he could not speak further. He sprang up, went into his room and closed the door.

The young man remained sitting, mystified and dumb-founded. On reaching home he came to his own. He began to wonder why he did not ask him all the

questions he had thought of asking. But the image of the *mahāpuruṣa* repeatedly appeared in his mind along with the image of Vraja and *Vraja-līlā* and drove the thoughts away.

The *mahāpuruṣa* had given the young man a big jolt and tried to pull him out of the dungeon of Māyāvāda. But the roots of Māyāvāda in his mind were so strong that they would not easily come out. A struggle ensued between the old *samskāras*² and the new. The young man had to pass a number of days in a state of tension. But he continued to go to the *mahāpuruṣa* as long as he stayed in Allahabad. Every day he felt more and more attracted towards him and more and more convinced of the falsity of the philosophy that preached that the Śrī Vīgrahas of Bhagavān were false.

But the *mahāpuruṣa* did not stay in Allahabad long. He went to Kāśī at the invitation of the Mahārāja of Kāśī. He kindly agreed to take the young man with him to Kāśī. From Kāśī he went to Calcutta and after about a month from Calcutta to Darjilinga. Throughout this period the young man travelled with him and listened to his talks and discourses. Finally he surrendered himself completely at his feet and asked for initiation. He was duly initiated.

The saint was Prabhupāda Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, the founder president of the Gauḍīya Mission and the young man was the author.

The change brought about in the author was not

² Impressions on the mind

due so much to the argument of Prabhupāda as to his personality and the impact of the picture of *Vraja-dhāma* and *Vraja-līlā* he had impinged upon his mind

In this manner Prabhupāda influenced many more ignorant and self conceited people like the author by his precepts and personality and pulled them out of the mire of *Māyāvāda*. Many he rescued from the maze of *Jñāna* and Karma. At the time of his appearance there was a dominance of the *Jñānis*, the *Śāktās* and the *Smārtas* in the country. Bhakti mixed with *Jñāna* and Karma had taken the place of pure Bhakti. Sects like *Āṣṭa*, *Bāṣṭa* and *Kartābhājā*, prevailed, whose followers called themselves Vaiṣṇavas, but whose principles and practices were far removed from Vaiṣṇavism. Mahāprabhu's religion of love, unmixd with *Jñāna* and Karma was almost forgotten. Mahāprabhu's prophecy was that His Name and His religion of love would spread in every nook and corner of the world:

*pṛthvī paryanta jata āche deśa grāma |
sarvatra pracāra haibeka mora nāma ||
(C.Bh. 3.4.126)*

For the fulfilment of this prophecy He had enjoined his followers to go everywhere and preach His religion of love:

*ataeva āmī ājñā dilun sabhākāre |
jāhān tāhān prema phala deha jāre tāre ||
(C.Bh. 1.9.36)*

But His followers had forgotten this. They were engaged in their own *sādhana*. Four hundred years had passed since the disappearance of Mahāprabhu, but no one had thought of preaching His religion all over in a systematic manner. Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī laid the foundation of Gauḍīya Mission mainly for the

purpose of preaching the religion of Mahāprabhu. His father Śrī Bhaktivinoda Thākura had founded the *Viśva-vaiṣṇava Rājāsabhā* with a similar purpose. He reorganized it. He made suitable arrangements for the teaching of Mahāprabhu's religion and for sending the trained *sannyāsīs*, *brahmacārīs* and *grhasthas* to distant places for preaching in the same manner in which the Christians send their trained missionaries for preaching their religion to different places.

From the point of view of the propagation of the teachings of Mahāprabhu it will not be improper, it seems, to call Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī the Mādhavendra Puri of the present age. Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja has said in *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* that Mādhavendra Puri was the first sprout of *Bhakti-kalpataṛu* (wish fulfilling tree of Bhakti.) When the sprout grew into a tree there sprang out from it several branches in the shape of many *ācāryas* like *Isvara Puri*, *Advaitācārya*, *Nityānanda*, *Paramānanda Puri* and *Viṣṇu Puri*. The people of the world tasted the fruits of *prema*, that grew on them. Four hundred years after it was a seed of the same fruit that appeared in the form of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī and grew into a *Kalpataṛu*, from which appeared many branches. It is the fruits of those branches that the world is enjoying today. There is hardly any country in the world to which the fruits have not reached.

It is said in *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* that *Nāma-saṁkīrtana*, which is the only *dharma* of the age of Kali, cannot be preached without the *śakti* of Kṛṣṇa *kālī-kālera dharma nāma-saṁkīrtana |*
Kṛṣṇa-śakti binā nahe tāra pravartana ||
(C.C. 3.7.11)

It is obvious from this that Prabhupāda Bhakti-siddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī was a *mahāpuruṣa* specially endowed with the *śakti* of Kṛṣṇa, who was made to appear by the will of Mahāprabhu for preaching *nāma-saṁkīrtana*.

Bhakti-siddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī appeared in Pūrī in the year 1874. He was named Vimala Prasāda. At that time his father Śrī Kedāranātha Datta Bhaktvinoda Thākura was deputy magistrate in Pūrī and he lived in Nārāyaṇa Chātā, a house near the temple of Jagannātha. Six months after the appearance of the child Ratha-Yātrā festival was held. The *ratha* remained stationed in front of the house of Thākura Bhaktvinoda for three days. His wife Śrīmatī Bhagavatī Devī climbed the *ratha* and lay the child at the feet of Jagannātha. As she did so, the garland worn by Jagannātha fell on the child. The *pūjārī* said, "Mā! This child of yours will be a *mahāpuruṣa*. Jagannātha has blessed him."

The signs of *mahāpuruṣa* began to appear in Vimala Prasāda at the very beginning. When still young he used to read *Gīta-Govinda*, *Kaṇāmṛta* and Narottama Thākura's *Prema-Bhakti-candrikā* with great relish. Everyday before going to school, he did *Nāma-japa* and *arcana-pūjana* regularly. In 1881, when Bhaktvinoda Thākura was building his 'Bhakti-bhavana' in Calcutta, an image of Śrī Kūrmadeva was found while digging the foundation of the house. Vimala Prasāda took *mantra* form Bhaktvinoda Thākura and began to worship the image.

Vimala Prasāda passed the entrance examination and was admitted into the Sanskrit College, Calcutta for higher education in 1892. He could not apply his mind to the subjects taught in the college. He sat all the time

in the college library and read books on philosophy. From Śrī Prthvīdhar Sharma he learned *Siddhānta Kaumudī* and the Vedas and the other *śāstras*. Within a short time he acquired proficiency in Veda, Sanskrit grammar, Kāvyaśāstra and astrology. After that he established 'Sarasvata Catuspāthī' in 'Bhakti-bhavana' and started teaching astrology to students.

From 1895 to 1905 he worked in the Tripura State in various capacities under Mahārāja Viracandra Mānikya Bahādur and Mahārāja Rādhākīśora Mānikya Bahādur. The latter appointed him as tutor to teach Bengali and Sanskrit to his sons.

During this period he had been quietly doing his *bhajana*. In 1900 he decided to take initiation from a competent guru. He approached Gaurakīśora Dāsa Bābājī for initiation. Gaurakīśora Bābājī did not easily give initiation to anyone. When Vimalā Prasāda requested him for initiation he said, "I shall ask Mahāprabhu." The next day, when he again went to him, he said, "I forgot to ask Mahāprabhu." The third time he said, "I have asked Mahāprabhu. He does not permit." Vimalā Prasāda said, "You are a disciple of the crooked Kṛṣṇa. No wonder, therefore, that you do not want to give *dikṣā*. Rāmānuja had to request his guru Śrī Goṣṭhīpūrṇa for *dikṣā* eighteen times. Then he gave him *dikṣā*. I will be at your feet praying for your *dikṣā* until your heart melts and you give *dikṣā* to me." Gaurakīśora Dāsa Bābā was pleased to hear this and he gave him *dikṣā*.³

In 1905 Vimalā Prasāda started a billion *Nāma-*

³ Prabhupāda Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti-siddhānta Sarasvatī. p. 20
(Published by Gauḍīya Maṭha)

japa mahāyajna. At the conclusion of the *yajna* he found himself equipped with great *śakti* for preaching the religion of Mahāprabhu. He started preaching. But he encountered such opposition from the followers of various kinds of pseudo Vaiṣṇavism that he had to give up preaching in disgust. He again started *bhājana* in seclusion.

In 1916 Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura disappeared from this world to join the eternal *līlā* of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in celestial Vṛndāvana. Before his disappearance he again enjoined and encouraged Vimalā Prasada to preach without fear and confidence, because he had the *śakti* of Mahāprabhu with him. Therefore he decided to start preaching again. But he thought that in order that preaching might be forceful it was necessary to take *sannyāsa*. He would have taken *sannyāsa* from Gaurakīśora Dāsa Bābājī or Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura who had also taken *sannyāsa* towards the end of his life, if they were present. But since both of them had disappeared, he did not know what to do. In his state of anxiety one night Gaurakīśora Dāsa Bābājī appeared to him in a dream and gave him *sannyāsa*.⁴ The next day he completed all the ceremonial formalities of *sannyāsa* and assumed *sannyāsa* before a picture of Gaurakīśora Dāsa Bābājī. Since then he was known as Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī.

⁴ After his *sannyāsa* Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī once met Rāmakṛṣṇa Dāsa Bābā, a *siddha* saint and the crest jewel of the *sādhus* of Vṛndāvana during those days, when Śrī Lalitā Mohana Gosvāmī, one of his closest associates was sitting near him. Pandita Bābā, asked him from whom he had taken *sannyāsa*. He replied, "My Gurudeva Śrī Gaurakīśora Dāsa Bābājī gave me *sannyāsa* in a dream." Lalitā Mohana Gosvāmī later told the author about this.

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī started preaching with new vigour and new hope and vision. The vision soon materialised. Within the short period of 19 years (1918 to 1937) he established Mathas in Navadvīpa, Vṛndāvana, Puṛī, Kanpur, Allahabad, Dhākā, Mairansinha Nārayanagarī, Caṭtagrama, Medinīpur, Remunā, Bāleśvara, Āśānātha Madras, Delhi, Patana, Gayā, Lucknow, Kāśī, Haridvāra, Mathurā, Kurukṣetra, Āśām, Rangoon and London, etc., as centres of preaching. He trained 25 educated *sannyāsīs* in the philosophy and religion of Mahāprabhu and sent them for preaching to different places in India and abroad. As the most important medium of preaching he published a number of magazines in various languages—*The Harmonist* in English, *Gauḍīya* in Bengali, *Bhāgavata* in Hindi, *Kīrtana* in Āśāmī and *Paramārthī* in Oṇyā, besides the daily *Nediyā-Prakāśa* in Bengali.

Prabhupāda also wrote and edited many books, including *Caitanya Caritāmṛta*, *Caitanya Bhāgavata*, *Caitanya Mangala*, *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, *Śrīmad Bhāgavat-gītā* and *Brahma-saṁhitā*. He asked some of his disciples to devote themselves exclusively to writing books on various subjects relating to Bhakti and Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, because, he said, there was no *bhājana* or *sevā* more important than preaching through writing. He asked Śrī Sunderānanda Vidyāvinoda to write in Bengali, Śrī Svāmī B.P. Tīrtha Mahārāja and Prof. N.K. Sanyal to write in English and the author to write in English and Hindi. The author's thesis on 'The Philosophy of Śrī Caitanya,' which was approved by the University of Allahabad for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, was written at his command and under his close supervision. It was later published with some

addition under the title *The Philosophy and Religion of Śrī Caitanya*⁵

After thus securely laying down the foundation of the movement aiming at the fulfilment of Mahāprabhu's prophecy regarding the preaching of His religion of love all over the world, Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī left the world on January 1, 1937 to join the *līlā* of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in celestial Vṛndāvana.

CHAPTER XXIII

ŚRĪ HARIDĀSA DĀSA

(Navadvīpa)

Śrī Haridāsa Dāsa has been a unique *mahātmā*, who attained *siddhi*¹ through the service of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava literature. Siddha Śrī Manohara Dāsa Bābā had said to him, "I entrust you with the responsibility of discovering, translating and publishing the books of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* and writing and publishing others and bless that you may attain *siddhi* through this." Therefore he devoted his whole life to the service of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava literature. His contribution to Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava literature is incomparable, looking at the number, size and importance of the works he has compiled and published one would wonder whether it is possible for a single person to do that work in a single lifetime. His *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhāna*² alone is a work, which would normally take a whole lifetime to be completed. It is the encyclopedia of the vast Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava literature. The first part of the encyclopedia gives the meaning of the difficult Sanskrit words and technical philosophical terms used in all the published and unpublished works of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. The second part gives the meaning of all the terms of Vraja-bhāṣā.

⁵ The book was out of print for sometime. But a new edition of the book has been published in November of 1994

¹ Accomplishment of *bhājana* which means the realization of Kṛṣṇa.

² Encyclopedia of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism.

Uḍiyā, Bengali and Marthila languages used in the Vaiṣṇava verses from the time of Vidyāpati and Candīdāsa upto the time of Śrī Narahan Cakravartī. The third part gives the substance of each of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava books and the biographies of their authors and each of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava saints, who lived at the time of the completion of the work. The fourth part gives a detailed description of all the *tīrthas* (holy places), *dhāmas* and the festivals of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas.

When the work comprising 2065 pages in double-crown size was ready for publication, Haridāsa Dāsa had to face the problem of finding finance for printing. It was not an easy task for a *vairāgi* Bābājī like him, who lived on *mādhukarī*. If he had thought of it before starting the work, he would have, perhaps, been compelled to give it up. He thought that it was an essential part of service to the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava literature and the Vaiṣṇavas and he decided to undertake the project depending entirely upon the mercy of the Lord and the Vaiṣṇavas. On conclusion of the work he went to Parama Bhāgavata Śrī Rāmadāsa Bābājī Mahārāja and sought his help. He blessed him and said, "Don't worry. You remember Śrī guru and start printing." The printing was started and the money also started coming, one does not know how and from where.³

The earlier name of Śrī Haridāsa Dāsa was Harendra Kumāra. His father Śrī Gaganacandra Tarkaratna lived in village Madhu, in Noakhālī district. He was poor, though famous for his learning. He had two sons. The younger Maṇindra Kumāra had renounced the world and become

a *sādhū*, when still a boy Harendra Kumāra passed the matriculation examination in 1919. He had no financial support for further continuing his studies. Therefore he began to live with Vipina Bābū, Munsif of Cumillā as the tutor of his children and got himself admitted into the Cumillā College for further studies. When Vipina Bābū was transferred from Cumillā, he began to live in his house in Mākadadāha (district Hawrah) and read in Ripun College, Calcutta. In 1925 he passed M.A. in Sanskrit from the Calcutta University. He stood first in first division in the examination and was awarded a gold medal by the university.

Even when Harendra was a post-graduate student, he had begun to live more or less like a *vairāgi*. He went from time to time to Śrī Gindhārī Haribol Bābājī in Navadvīpa and did *mādhukarī bhikṣā* with him. Therefore though after passing M.A., he had all the prospects of a happy, prosperous and respectful career, he decided to become a recluse. At that time the only precious thing he possessed was the gold medal he was awarded by the university. He sold it and with the money he got he purchased a piece of land adjoining the Haribol Kutira of Haribol Bābājī for its extension. At the same time he took initiation from Śrī Harimohana Gosvāmī and went to Vraja. There he began to live with strict *vairāgya* and do *bhājana*. For one and a half years he lived in Rādhākūṇḍa on *mādhukarī*. During this period every morning he swept the land round Rādhākūṇḍa.

In 1933 he took *veśa* from Haribol Bābājī. He gave him the name Haridāsa Dāsa. Then he went to Puri and for some time served the Haridāsa Thākura Maṭha. After returning from Puri he again went to Vṇḍāvāna

³ The work was out of print for a long time. Its second edition has now been published by Śrī Kṛṣṇa-janma-sthāna, Mathura.

at the behest of Gurudeva to live in the company of Siddha Śrī Manohara Dāsa Bābā of Govindakuṇḍa. In 1944 he went to Pūrī at the time of Ratha-Yātrā with Haribol Bābājī. Haribol Bābājī left his body in Pūrī Haridāsa Dāsa then returned to Navadvīpa. He lived in Haribol Kuṭīra and started *Grantha-sevā*,⁴ as a mode of *sādhana* which lasted till the end. His last work was *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Abhidhāna*. He used to say that with the completion of that work his life would also end. Accordingly with the completion of that work in September 1957 his life also came to an end. But the second volume of the work could not be published during his lifetime. The Bengal government appointed a committee for its publication and it was published under the supervision of that committee a year later.

Ever since Śrī Haridāsa Dāsa started his *sādhana* in the form of *Grantha-sevā*, he got up early in the morning, sang aloud 'Gaura Haribol' with the accompaniment of *khanjani*⁵ and then sat down to work. He lived on *mādhukarī* and worked 17 hours a day, copying the old manuscripts, editing and translating them and writing their commentaries. He also got them printed. The entire work of writing, printing, proof-reading and distributing was done by him single-handed. He also collected money for paper and printing by begging.

Once on account of writing all the time Haridāsa Dāsa's hand got paralyzed and water began to flow ceaselessly from his eyes. The doctor and his friends advised him to stop reading and writing for some time. But he did not heed their advice. He said, "I have

seen so many times that the disease aggravates to the extent of becoming almost fatal, if I become slack in service, and disappears, if I work with greater vigour." It is true that if a work is done without any selfish motive and with the sole purpose of causing happiness to Śrī Bhagavān and His devotees, then it goes on smoothly inspite of all the difficulties that come in the way. Haridāsa Dāsa continued the work with still greater determination and assiduity and both his eyes and hand became normal.

Haridāsa Dāsa used to say, "I do not live by bread, but by service to the great works compiled by the associates of Mahāprabhu—by discovering, and translating them, by writing commentaries on them and by printing them so that they are made available to the devotees. They are my *īṣṭa*, the objects of my exclusive devotion. Without service to them I cannot live." He actually worshipped them as the devotee worships God. In his anxiety to find some work which was supposed to be lost, he lost sleep and hunger. If he could not find it, he prayed to it and wept for it, as the devotee prays to God and weeps for Him. At last he had its mercy and found it, as the devotee has the mercy of the God he worships and finds Him.

In this way he discovered *Mādhava Mahotsava*, the great work of Śrī jīva and the *Arthasālikā Tikā* of *Bhaktirasāmṛta-sindhu*, written by Śrī Mukunda Dāsa Gosvāmī, a disciple of Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja.

He tried his best to find Sanātana Gosvāmī's *Śrī Kṛṣṇa-līlā-stava*, but could not. Then there was no end to his grief. He lost his sleep and cried day and night. One day while he sat on the bank of Yamunā, weeping and crying, "Ha! Prabhu Sanātana! Ha! Prabhu Sanātana!"

⁴ Service of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava literature.

⁵ A musical instrument.

he saw a bundle of something flowing in the river near the bank. Out of curiosity he ran and picked it up. On opening the bundle he saw in the midst of many other papers a very old copy of *Śrī Kṛṣṇa-līlā-stava*. He was overwhelmed with joy. He touched it with his forehead and hugged it again and again with tears streaming out of his eyes and tremor and horripilation appearing all over his body. Later he translated and published it.

CHAPTER XXIV

MĀ MANI

(Calcutta/Purī)

Mā Mani's father Hareśvara Nātha Basu was the commissioner of Vardhamān. But she lived in her early years till the age of ten with her widowed grandmother in village Galasī in district Vardhamān. Her grandmother was a devoted lady. She passed all her time in *japa* and *kīrtana* and in *Bhāgavata-pāṭhā*. Mā Mani's religious life began under her guidance. She listened to her *Bhāgavata-pāṭhā* with great relish and accompanied her, when she went to attend the discourses on *Gītā*, *Bhāgavata* and *Rāmāyana* by the panditas of the village. She also observed fast on all the days which her grandmother fasted.

She was married at the early age of ten. But it was several years after that she went to live with her husband in Calcutta.

At the age of thirty she took *dīkṣā* from Śrī Jagadbandhu Maitra, a disciple of Śrī Vijaya Kṛṣṇa Gosvāmī. Since the time of *dīkṣā* her *bhajana* continued unabated like a stream in spate. She writes in her autobiography that she did not have to make any effort in *japa*. It went on automatically with each breath that she breathed. As instructed by her guru every morning from 3 o'clock to 6 o'clock she sat on her *āsana* and did *japa* and *smaraṇa* continually for three hours. During the rest

of the day she used to be busy with the activities of the household. But she reserved the nights exclusively for *bhajana*. No one could ask her to do anything at night.

In 1941 her husband died leaving her alone in a house newly built by him on Heugjes Road in Calcutta. When she was sitting by the side of his dead body and arrangements were being made for funeral, she heard in a state of entrancement *Vijaya Kṛṣṇa Gosvāmī*, who had long before ceased to belong to this world, commanding her as follows:

1. Do not go anywhere from this house for a year.
2. Do not accept the service or support of anyone. I shall provide whatever help or support you need. Do not worry.

Mā Maṇi's younger brother *Sudhikumāra Basu* was the Professor and Head of the Dept. of Psychology in Calcutta University and the Deputy Director of the Social and Economic Development Research Centre for South East Asia of U.N.O. After the death of her husband he wanted her to go and live with him. But she did not. She continued to live alone. A servant came morning and evening to do all her work. An old man, named *Harī Saradāra*, who was provided board and lodging by her, worked as watchman. The only person, whose support she had was the watchman.

After sometime the watchman died and she was deprived of whatever little support she had. There was no one now upon whom she could depend except '*Gosvāmījī*' (*Vijaya Kṛṣṇa Gosvāmī*). *Gosvāmījī* continued to manage her affairs as he had promised.

One day a Brahmin came with a cart full of 18 *maunds* of coal and said, "Mā! I have bought the coal

you wanted and for which you sent that black colored boy to my store." Mā Maṇi was surprised. She said, "There is no boy living here. Nor did I ask anyone to bring coal for me."

The Brahmin said, "Mā! I am a Brahmin. I shall not tell a lie. Please take the coal. I cannot take it back."

Mā Maṇi thought that that might be a part of *Gosvāmījī*'s arrangements. She took the coal and paid him the price, which was Rs 36. After some time control was imposed upon the sale of coal and one had to stand in a long line to purchase it. It was not possible for Mā Maṇi to do so. Her belief was then confirmed that it was *Gosvāmījī* who had kindly arranged for the purchase of coal before the imposition of control.

After the death of *Harī Saradāra* Mā Maṇi engaged a man of *Medinipur*, named *Rāma*, for keeping watch at night. One day *Rāma* said to her, "Mā! A man of my village purchased 4 *seers* of pulse for carrying home. But now he is not going home. He will be obliged if you kindly purchase the pulse. Mā purchased it, thinking that perhaps that was also a part of *Gosvāmījī*'s arrangement. She already had good stock of rice. So the arrangement was now complete for food and provisions for a long time.

The next day broke out communal riots between Hindus and Muslims. Mā Maṇi's house was surrounded mostly by Muslims. They started murdering and plundering the Hindus. Mā Maṇi was cut off from the world. Her world was only what she could see from the roof of her house. What she saw from the roof made her shudder with fear. She saw only carnage, corpses, smoke and flames and heard only shrieks of men, women and children.

Since Gosvāmījī had made arrangements for her provisions for a sufficiently long period, she was not very much inconvenienced on account of being cut off from the rest of the world. Amidst the rioting and killings she could easily live on rice and pulses and the nectar of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*.

Some Hindu youth of the locality patrolled at night. Even then the Muslims once hatched a plan for attacking Mā Maṇi's house at night. But it started raining since evening and the low land round the house was filled with so much water that it became impossible to cross it. One day some young men came with petrol to set fire to her house. But when they were about to do so a party of military men came patrolling to that side and they ran away.

In this way Mā Maṇi was able to live alone in that house for even more than a year. No harm came to her. Living alone in that house proved to be helpful in her *bhajana*. The ugliness of the world of which she had direct experience during the riots also gave her impetus in *bhajana*. She could not, during this period, forget Gosvāmījī and the Lord even for a moment. This may have been the reason why Gosvāmījī asked her not to leave the house for a year.

In 1945 Mā Maṇi went to Vṛndāvana with her mother and brother for *darśana*. She purchased a picture of Gopāla from there and began to worship it. After sometime Gopāla proved that He was alive and began to behave accordingly.

In 1947 Gosvāmījī asked Mā Maṇi in a dream to go to Pūrī. From Calcutta she went to Pūrī. She lived there for two years. She was now old and there was no one to serve or help her. Even then she

passed her days joyfully in doing the *darśana* of Jagannātha and attending the *ārātis* and *yātrās*. Even in rain and storm she did not give up the *darśana* of Jagannātha.

In 1949 she suddenly became restless to go to Vṛndāvana. At that time her health was not good. She was almost bed-ridden. Financially also she was crippled. In that condition she went to her brother-in-law's daughter Jyotsnā and her husband Raibahādur Satiscandra Roy in Cuttack. She asked them to arrange for her visit to Vṛndāvana. They advised her not to go to Vṛndāvana on account of her health. But how could she rest without going. She continued to pray to Gosvāmījī. By the mercy of Gosvāmījī circumstances for her visit to Vṛndāvana became more and more favourable. Her brother Sudhira happened to come from Calcutta in connection with some work and he took her with him to Calcutta. In Calcutta she took homeopathic treatment and her health improved. Her brother's student was at that time going to Aligarh. He agreed to take her to Vṛndāvana. The tenant, who lived in her house at Heuges Road gave her three hundred rupees in advance. Thus her financial problem also was solved. She reached Vṛndāvana. One of her god-brothers, who lived in Dhīrasamīra Kunja in Vṛndāvana, arranged for her lodging in a room in that Kunja.

Mā Maṇi had now passed 36 years leading a strictly disciplined life of *bhajana*. On reaching Vṛndāvana her spiritual eyes opened by the grace of Gosvāmījī and she began to have the *darśana* of Kṛṣṇa-līlā. Every day, as she sat on her *āsana* for *bhajana*, she first had the *darśana* of her *Parama-guru* Śrī Vijaya-Kṛṣṇa Gosvāmī and his wife Mā Tākurānī Śrī Yogamāyā

Devī, and then of *Kṛṣṇa-līlā* in her autobiography, called *Jīvana-gāthā*, she has written as follows:

"While in *Vṛndāvana* I did not go anywhere. I sat on my *bhajana-āsana* from 3-4 o'clock to 8-9 o'clock in the morning and from 4-5 o'clock to 8-9 o'clock in the evening. During this period Gosvāmījī made me have the *darśana* of *līlā* and taught me many things. He asked me to make a note of the *līlā-darśana* I had and his teachings. The process of *līlā-darśana* and teachings of Gosvāmījī that started in *Vṛndāvana* continues till now

"I am illiterate. I cannot read or write even Bengali well. Still I do not know how even the most difficult Sanskrit *stotras*, *stavas* etc., are written down by me. Portions of what I have written have been published in the form of books. The *līlā*s of which I had the *darśana* in *Vṛndāvana* have been published in a book titled *Śrī Śrī Vṛndāvana-līlā* and the teachings of Gosvāmījī of this period have been published in a book titled *Śrī Śrī Sadguru-Upadeśāmṛta*.

"I started writing the description of the *līlā*s I saw in *Vṛndāvana* and the teachings of Gosvāmījī at the insistence of Gosvāmījī I had never imagined that they would be published in the form of books. I vehemently opposed the publication because I am neither qualified for writing these books nor I am so accomplished in *bhajana* as to have the experiences I had I had them due to the causeless mercy of Gosvāmījī. Besides I thought if anyone disbelieved the facts of *līlā-darśana*, I shall feel pained at heart and the person disbelieving would suffer

"But Gosvāmījī said, 'Look, in this Yuga imitation is adored more than the real. Many hypocrites, who

pass as prophets are preaching religion of different kinds which are attractive because they cater to the whims and impulses of people, but are far from truth. People are easily carried away by them. They are presenting the pure religion of Mahāprabhu as it suits their nefarious purposes. They preach and practise the very things, which Mahāprabhu had forbidden. Therefore it is necessary that the religion of Mahāprabhu is presented in its pure form. The publication of your experiences and my teachings will be of considerable help in this direction."

"I said, 'You had first asked me not to disclose these things to anyone. I had, therefore, kept them a secret. But you are now asking me to publish them. I do not know why'

"Then Śrī Śrī Mātā Thākuraṇī Yogamāyā Devī said, 'When you first have *līlā-darśana*, it is necessary to keep it secret. But there is no harm if you share the secret with others afterwards. The *Ṛṣis* have always been making the result of their *sādhana* known to others. If they did not, would it have been possible for the *jīvas* to have any knowledge of the spiritual world?'

"In this way *Vṛndāvana-līlā* and *Upadeśāmṛta* were published by Their wish."

We are reproducing below some of the experiences of Mā Maṇi as described by her date-wise in *Vṛndāvana-līlā*

20 Bhādra, 1956 (1959)¹

It was about 7 o'clock in the morning. I sat on the *āsana* and started *japa*. After some time in a half-conscious state I saw ten or twelve *gopis* moving about

¹ The dates are according to the Bengali calendar

like shadows after placing their brass pitchers on the bank of Yamunā. Then I saw Gosvāmījī Mātā Thākuraṇī Yogamāyā Devī and Gurudeva. Gosvāmījī and Mātā Thākuraṇī were sitting and Gurudeva was standing.

At the same time a boy about seven or eight years old, whose colour was blue, who had a flute in his hand, a tuft of hair tied together as crest on his head and whose clothes were yellow, came and looked at me with a sweet smile. I asked him, "Can I get whole meal anywhere here?" He said, "Yes surely, you will get."

At noon a *pūjārī* of the temple of Govinda Deva came and said "Will you take the *prasāda* of Govinda Deva?" I said, "Yes, I will take." He brought five breads, pulses and vegetables. The same *pūjārī* brought me Govindajī's *prasāda* everyday. I did not have to cook as long as I stayed in Vṛndāvana.

11. Āśvina

Today in the evening I went for *darśana* in the temples. After going to three temples, I went to the temple of Lālā Bābū for the *darśana* of Śrī Kṛṣṇacandramā. While I was looking at Him *Nāma-japa* became too vigorous and so full of emotion, that I could hardly control myself. I thought I should sit down. But if I sat down I did not know when I would get up. It was already getting dark. There was no one whose help I could seek, no one to whom I could speak about my condition. This was not a thing to be spoken about. I began to pray to Thākura and say, "O Thākura! Let me somehow reach home." Somehow I started. On the way in front of the temple of Gopēśvara Mahādeva I began to lose outward consciousness on seeing Mahādeva

dancing in the form of *sakhī*. I said, "Jai Gurudeva! Thākura protect me!" At that time while moving slowly, I saw a boy about seven or eight years old. He came and held my left hand and began to walk with me. I said, "You are going with me. But how will you return alone?" He pointed to a girl of his age, who was standing there. She came and held my right hand. Both took me home. I asked them, "Now how will both of you go?" The girl pointed to Lālā Bābū,² who was standing there. I was not yet quite self-composed in the state of *bhāva*. I sat down on my *āsana*. As soon as I sat down I saw the same boy and girl standing before me in the form of Śrī Kṛṣṇacandramā and Rādhārāṇī and Lālā Bābū standing behind Them with folded hands. I also saw Gosvāmījī at that time. I could not understand it all. I said to Gosvāmījī, "What do I see?" He said, "See well. It is with great good luck that one has direct *darśana*."

21. Āśvina

In the morning I sat down on the *āsana*. Immediately I saw Gosvāmījī and Mātā Thākuraṇī. Then came Rādhārāṇī with Her *sakhīs*. The *sakhīs* said, "Today we shall hide Rādhārāṇī. Let us see what Kṛṣṇa does, when He comes." They hid Rādhā in a *kunja*. Kṛṣṇa came blowing His flute. He said to the *sakhīs*, "Where is Rādhā?"

"She could not come today. She has been confined at home," said the *sakhīs*.

Kṛṣṇa drew a long face and sat down. He said

² A Siddha saint, who installed the deity of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Candramā in a famous temple in Vṛndāvana. See *Saints of Vraja*, pp 106-122.

to the *sakhis*. "Can you not bring Her somehow? I cannot bear Her separation"

Lalitā said, "Why should Her people allow Her to come to the forest everytime?"

Śrī Kṛṣṇa said grievously, "You bring her anyhow."

The *sakhis* could not bear to see Kṛṣṇa so much in distress. They brought Rādhā out from the *kunja* and made Her sit by the side of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa was overwhelmed with *bhāva*. He clasped Her close to His heart. I was charmed to see Them clasped in each other's arms. Gosvāmījī said, "See, see to your heart's content and note it down. I am making you see all these *līlās* so that you may publish them."

I said, "You have so many disciples. Why not publish through them?" He said, "If they have this kind of *darśana*, they will think that it is the result of their *sādhana*. It is not so with you. You have absolute faith in the mercy of the guru and believe that it is all due to his mercy."

26. Āśvina

In the morning as soon as I sat down on the *āsana* I had the *darśana* of Gosvāmījī and Mātā Thākuraṇī. After sometime came two children—a boy and a girl. I said, "Who are You?" The girl replied, "We came that day and took you to your home. Have you forgotten?" Then I was reminded of Lalā Bābū's Śrī Kṛṣṇacandramā and Rādhārāṇī. The girl said, "You did not come again." I said, "With whom could I go?" The boy said, "Come once again. I shall come to take you." Gosvāmījī said, "Very well, she will come one day." Then both went walking arm-in-arm.

I asked Gosvāmījī, "On my return to Purī will I

still have your *darśana* and Mātā Thākuraṇī's?" He said, "You will see us whenever you want. As soon as you sit at the *āsana*, you will see us."

At this time came Śrī Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu. I made obeisance to Him. He blessed me by placing His hand on my head. Then Gosvāmījī, Mātā Thākuraṇī and Mahāprabhu began to talk among Themselves. I could not understand the language in which they were talking.

1. Kārtika

In the morning I had some headache. As I sat on the *āsana*, I saw Mātā Thākuraṇī and Gosvāmījī. A boy and a girl, both seven or eight years old, came to me. I said, "Who are you?" The girl said, "You forget everytime." We came only the other day. I am Rādhā." The boy said, "I am Kṛṣṇa."

"Are you the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa of Vṇḍāvana or Your names are 'Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa'?" I asked.

Both burst into laughter, which they could hardly control. I enjoyed Their laughter to my heart's content. The girl said in a sweet tone, "We are the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa of Vṇḍāvana. You are Our own. We love you. You have headache. So We have come. We shall massage a little and the headache will disappear."

I said, "Both of You are so young and You will serve me!"

Then She said, "If We don't who will? Who else is yours besides Us?"

"Then it is alright. You can massage." I replied. Oh! How sweet and comforting the touch of Their hands! The headache disappeared as soon as They touched. They also disappeared.

I said to Gosvāmījī, "Last time, when I came to Vṛndāvana, the kind of *darśana* I had made me think that I was blest. But this time the *līlā-darśana* I have, by your mercy and the ocean of nectar in which I swim, is beyond all understanding and imagination. This time I feel I am completely transformed. I have a new life altogether."

Gosvāmījī said, "Even the kind of *darśana* you had last time cannot be easily had. It is a matter of great good fortune. People come to Vṛndāvana only with the desire of earning the *punya* or the mercy that comes from the *darśana* of a holy place as a good deed. How can they have the kind of *darśana* you had? It is only when one surrenders completely to the *Sadguru* and depends entirely upon his mercy, when one gives up all kinds of attachment and chants *Harināma* selflessly, that *darśana*, as you had, is possible."

4. Kārtika

In the morning I was sitting on my *āsana* and doing *Harināma*. I saw Gosvāmījī and Mātā Ṭhākuraṇi on the bank of Yamunā. I made obeisance to Them. Soon came the same boy and girl and sat in my lap. I said to Them, "Oh! How much You love me! I am sorry that when I go back from here I will not see You." Then both of Them lovingly threw Their arms round my neck and said, "Mā! Can We ever forsake you? Wherever you be, as soon as you sit on the *āsana*, We shall reach you along with Gosvāmījī and you will see Us." My heart was filled with joy to hear this. I said, "I am sorry I have nothing, which I can give You to eat." The girl said, "When you go to your home or to Purī, give Us plenty to eat. Now let Us

go. We shall come again." Both went.

8. Kārtika

In the morning as soon as I got up from the bed, I saw Gosvāmījī and Mātā Ṭhākuraṇi standing. Oh! How beautiful! When I sat down on the *āsana* I saw them sitting. I also saw Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Rādhārāṇī sitting in *Nikunja*. Soon the *sakhis* came with flowers. They asked me to make garlands. Happily I started making garlands. The *sakhis* also started making garlands. Afterward, Kṛṣṇa, Rādhā, Gosvāmījī and Mātā Ṭhākuraṇī were decorated with garlands. In the mean time came Devarṣi Nārada. He made obeisance to everyone. The *sakhis* said to Nārada, "You sing with the accompaniment of *vinā* and we dance." The *sakhis* began to dance. Oh! How beautiful and enchanting the dance! How ecstatic! I do not know what happened to me and where my heart and soul were swept away on seeing it. On regaining outward consciousness I found that I was sitting on my *āsana*.

After sometime I saw again that the same two children—boy and girl came and sat on my lap. I said, "Were You both playing somewhere?" Rādhā said, "We had gone to play after taking butter from the hands of Mā Yaśodā." I said, "Now I have to go back soon from here." Then both of Them said, "Don't worry. Wherever you go you will have the *darśana* of Vṛndāvana-līlā by the grace of Gosvāmījī. You will also see Us. Don't worry. Enjoy the *līlās* to your hearts content."

20. Kārtika

I had the *darśana* of Śrī Śrī Gosvāmījī, Śrī Śrī Mātā Ṭhākuraṇī and Śrī Śrī Gurudeva. I made obeisance

to them and sat down. I said, "Yesterday I had gone to all the temples for *darśana* I enjoyed the *darśana* very much." Then I said, "You had once made me see *rāsa-līlā* I did not have that *darśana* again. Oh! How beautiful and ecstasizing was that *darśana*!" Gosvāmījī said, "So you desire to see *rāsa-līlā*." While talking with him I began to see Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa with the eight principal *sakhis* and many other *gopis*. There were as many Kṛṣṇas as *gopis*. The *gopis* were dancing in a circle with their arms thrown round Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa were dancing in the middle. Suddenly everything disappeared. Gosvāmījī asked, "How did you like the *darśana*?" I said, "What shall I say? There is a flow-tide of bliss in my heart, which words cannot describe." Gosvāmījī placed his hand over my head and said, "Compose yourself. Be at peace. It is not small luck to have the *darśana* of *rāsa-līlā*. Today was the last day of your stay in Vṛndāvana. Therefore you had this *darśana*. Always do *Harināma*. In Pūrī also you will have the *darśana* of these *līlās*."

As desired by Gosvāmījī, Mani Mā left Vṛndāvana for Calcutta on 21 Kārtika, 1365³. She stayed in her house at Heuges Road. There also she continued to have the *darśana* of Gosvāmījī. Mātā Thākuranī and Vṛndāvana-līlā. One day Nārada Muni came to her singing with the accompaniment of *vinā*. He said, "Mā! You enjoy the special favour of Gosvāmījī. He has not been as merciful to anyone as he is to you. You will now develop *madhura-bhāva*. This *bhāva* will attain perfection in Pūrī. That state is very rare. You continue to do *Harināma*. Do as much *Harināma* as you can."

³ According to the Bengali calendar

One day Mā Mani said to Gosvāmījī, "I am experiencing the *viraha*⁴ of Rādhā. I do not relish anything. I feel like flying away somewhere."

Bhāva has begun to sprout in your heart. Be at peace and do *Harināma*. This state is attained only by the mercy of the *Sadguru*, not by any *sādhana*," replied Gosvāmījī.

Gosvāmījī now asked her to go to her father-in-law's house at Belatoḍa. She went there. It was an old palatial house of Zamidāri days with seven doors, which one had to cross in order to reach the inner apartment. It was also empty because all the members of the family now lived outside in different places. She began to live alone in a room in that house.

One day, when the Kumbha was going on in Haridvāra, she said to Gosvāmījī, "You had told me in Vṛndāvana that at the time of Kumbha-meḷā in Haridvāra, I shall live with you in your camp there and bathe in the Ganges. But this has not happened. I do not know why," Gosvāmījī said, "That will happen. Do *Harināma* and you will bathe in the Ganges in Haridvāra." At the same time Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu appeared. He said, "On the day of *Kumbha-snāna*⁵ you observe silence and dip down in *Harināma*. That will be real bath. Sit down on the *āsana*, remember Śrī Guru and Govinda and bathe in the Brahmakunḍa in Haridvāra."

On the day of *Kumbha-snāna* as soon as Mā Mani sat on her *āsana* she saw herself in Haridvāra with Gosvāmījī, Mātā Thākuranī, and Śrī Guru. She bathed

⁴ State in separation from Kṛṣṇa.

⁵ The day of Kumbha on which a bath in the holy Ganges is of great merit.

with them in Brahmakūṇḍa Gosvāmījī held her by the hand and dipped her into the Ganges four or five times. After that they came to the Ghāṭa and had the *darśana* of *Haripādapadmā*.⁶

After Mā Maṇi had lived in Beletoda for sometime Gosvāmījī asked her to go to Purī. In Purī she began to go regularly for the *darśana* of Jagannātha as before. But there too as soon as she sat on her *āsana*, she had the *darśana* of Gosvāmījī. Mātā Thākuraṇī and *Vraja-līlā*. At times she also had the *darśana* of Mahāprabhu enjoying *Vraja-līlā-rasa* with Svarūpa Damodara and Raya Rāmānanda.

On the day after Ratha-Yātrā Mā Maṇi saw four *pārśādas* (companions) of Jagannātha. They had four arms and the colour of their body was blue. They wore yellow clothes and *tilaka* on their forehead and garlands round their neck. They said to her, "Now leave this body and go with us to Vaikuṇṭha. Lord Jagannātha has asked us to take you there. You will not be reborn."

Mā Maṇi said, "Convey my *pranāma* to the Lord. I will not go without the permission of Gosvāmījī. He had told me that at the time of death he will himself come to take me. I do not aspire to be in Vaikuṇṭha without Gosvāmījī." Then they smiled and left. When Mā Maṇi told Gosvāmījī about this he said, "The Lord performed this *līlā* to test your guru-Bhakti. Since you have renounced even Vaikuṇṭha for the sake of guru, you will get everything by the grace of the guru. You don't have to worry. Enjoy the *līlā-rasa* for sometime.

⁶ The lotus-feet of Śrī Hari (footprints of Hari).

When the opportune moment comes I shall arrange for everything."

One day Mahāprabhu asked Mā Maṇi to preach *Nāma-brahma*. He said, "*Nāma-brahma* is most powerful. Until the *sādhaka* finds the *Saḍguru* he should chant the *Nāma*. The *Nāma* will bring him the guru." Gosvāmījī said to her, "*Nāma-brahma* is equally fruitful even for the *Śaktas*, *Vaiṣṇavas* and the *Śaivas*. It does not matter which god you worship through *Nāma-brahma*, you will reach the Supreme Lord. In the age of Kali there is no other way to attain the Lord."

Just as Mā Maṇi has described her experiences of *līlā* in *Vṇḍāvāna* in '*Vṇḍāvāna-līlā*,' she has, at the command of Gosvāmījī, described her experiences of *līlā* in Purī in one of her books called '*Puruṣottama-līlā*.' Some of those experiences have also been described in '*Jīvana-gaṭhe*.' We reproduce the following from the same:

17 Bhādra (1951)

Mahāprabhu said with a smile, "Every letter of *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* is effulgent, though no one can see it." Since then whenever I read *Caitanya Caritāmṛta*, I was surprised to see the letters radiating light. But sometimes, one or two letters appeared to be written with ordinary ink. I came to know later that they were interpolated. Since then I also had no difficulty in understanding everything written in *Caitanya Caritāmṛta*.

21 Pausa (1952)

Gosvāmījī said, "Jagannātha was saying, 'In the temple the *bhoga* is not being offered on time. Yesterday He was happy to eat with me the *khicari-bhoga* offered

by you. During my manifest life also, when there was anything wrong with the management of *bhoga* in the temple, He used to dine with me."

5 Jyestha (1953)

I was sitting on the *āsana* and doing *Harināma*, when came the young Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa of Vṛndāvana Rādhā: This time we shall live in 'Vraja-dhāma.'⁷ I: Why did both of You not come so long?

Kṛṣṇa Rādhā does not want to live anywhere except Vṛndāvana. Therefore we come to you and go back. Gosvāmīji has entrusted you with a lot of work. After that is finished you will go to Vṛndāvana. Till then we shall now live here. We shall enjoy the *bhoga* with Gosvāmīji.

Rādhā: This time We shall live in 'Vraja-dhāma.' In Purī there is *Dvārka-līlā*, in 'Vraja-dhāma' there is Vṛndāvana. Even Jagannātha comes to eat the *bhoga* in 'Vraja-dhāma.'

I: I do not have the means to offer special *bhoga*. I cook only some rice and vegetables and offer. There are so many temples in Purī in which rich *bhoga* is offered. In Jagannātha's *bhoga-mandira* royal repast of various kinds is served. But all of You relish my ordinary *bhoga*, because I have the special mercy of Gosvāmīji.

Kṛṣṇa In all those places We are adored as Thākura, which We do not like. They do not know how to love. We go to Our own people, who regard Us as their own. We live in Vṛndāvana, because the

⁷ A house in Kundavestasali, in Purī, in which Mā Maṇi used to live.

Vrajavāsīs regard Us their own and not as Thākura.

30 Vaisākha (1953)

Gosvāmīji Mā, Go and read *Vṛndāvana-līlā* in Jagannātha Temple. Jagannātha wants to listen.

I: As asked by you I read *Upadeśāmṛta* in the temple. Everyone liked it. I had thought that I would not read *Vṛndāvana-līlā* and *Puruṣottama-līlā* in the temple. But since you ask, I shall have to.

Gosvāmīji: Mā, nothing will now remain a secret. By Mahāprabhu's will everything shall be made public. Those who have listened to *Upadeśāmṛta* have acquired the qualification of listening to *Vṛndāvana-līlā*.

Therefore I started reading *Vṛndāvana-līlā* in the temple. The chief listener was Jagannātha. But the ladies also listened with great interest. Jagannāthaji loves very much to hear *Vṛndāvana-līlā*. His peculiar present form itself is the result of listening to *Vṛndāvana-līlā*.

25 Āśāḍha (1953)

I saw that Rādhārānī was weeping and yelling and running about as if She had gone mad. Lalitā was also weeping and trying to hold Her. The clouds of gloom and despair had cast their shadow over Vṛndāvana. Even the trees and the creepers were shedding tears. It was impossible for me to bear it.

Gosvāmīji said, "You are now witnessing Rādhārānī in separation. After Ratha-Yātrā Jagannātha will be in Gundicā for nine days. Then you will see *Milana-līlā*." ⁸

⁸ *Līlā* of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in union.

32 Āsadha (1953)

Mahāprabhu came shouting joyfully, 'Haribol! Haribol! I made obeisance He blessed and said "Mā! See *Vṇḍāvana-līlā* in Gundicā."

Just then I saw Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in union, both locked in each other's arms and the *sakhis* singing and dancing. The next moment I saw that Mahāprabhu and Gosvāmījī became one with Kṛṣṇa. I do not know how long I kept looking at Them, like one spell-bound. When that state was gone, I saw that Mahāprabhu and Gosvāmījī were standing and I was standing near Them with folded hands.

The next day Gosvāmījī said, "Mā, once the spiritual eye opens all the *līlās* can be seen. Until the mind turns inward and dives deep into *bhāva*, nothing can be seen. The Truth lies in the silence of the heart's depth. It cannot be attained in the din and noise of the world."

29 Agrahāvana

I asked Gosvāmījī, "This morning I saw a *Ṛṣi* having long matted hair with you. Who was he?"

He said, "He was your *gotra-pati* ⁹ Viśvāmitra. He had come to bless you. He insisted that I should send you to live with him for a month at the time of Kumbha-mela in Prayāga. I said, "She will not be able to go in her physical body. But everyday she will come and go with me in her subtle spiritual body."

I knew that in ancient times in the month of Māgha the Muni's assembled in the *āśrama* of Bharadvāja

⁹ The founder of a race

Muni in Prayāga. They lived there for a month to bathe in the Ganges and to talk about the various subjects mentioned in the *śāstras*. But today I was surprised to know that the practice still continues.

For one month Gosvāmījī took me to Prayāga everyday at the time of Kumbha-mela. As desired by him I listened to the talks between the *Ṛṣis* and noted it down. The talks were held in Sanskrit. I do not know even the alphabets of Bengali. But I am surprised how by the grace of the guru I wrote down everything. Whatever by the grace of the guru I saw and wrote at the time of Kumbha-mela in Prayāga has been published in a book under the title *Ṛṣi-vāṇī*.

24 Āśvina (1954) Śrādarāśa to 24 Kārtika (1954) Mahārāśa

During this period I was ill. All day I had 103 or 103 1/2 temperature. In that condition I lay alone in that big building called 'Vraja-dhama'. There was no one to attend upon me. I kept water and sugarcandy near me, which I took when required. In the evening, as asked by Gosvāmījī, I got up from the bed and sat on the *āsana*. At that time came five Vaiṣṇavas, with tall lustrous bodies. They talked about *rāśa*. Gosvāmījī and Mahāprabhu also used to be present. Mahāprabhu listened attentively. He asked me also to listen. I listened and simultaneously saw the *līlā* according to what I heard. On seeing the *līlā* I felt like diving deep into an ocean of transcendental bliss, which cannot be described. Even when they were gone the experience persisted. All my body and senses were deeply involved in the experience. When I was completely drowned in the bottomless ocean of bliss caused by the experience of *rāśa-līlā*, Gosvāmījī stopped the description and the display

of *rāsa-līlā*, for some time. When by his grace I got the power to bear and retain the experience of *rāsa-līlā*, he again started revealing it. The experiences I had during this period have, at the behest of Mahāprabhu and Gosvāmījī, been written and published in the book bearing the title *Sāra-saṅgraha-madhurimā*.¹⁰ When the second edition of this book was to be printed, Mahāprabhu told me about the way in which the cover should be designed. He also made the design and showed it to me.

Later I also came to know the names of the persons, who participated in the talks on *rāsa-līlā*. They were Śrī Sārvabhauma Bhattachārya, Śrī Gopinātha Ācārya, Śrī Kāśī Miśra, Śrī Kanāi Khutiyā and Śrī Vasudeva Miśra.

After Śrī Śrī Sadguru-upadeśāmṛta, Śrī Vṛndāvana-līlā, Śrī Puruṣottama-līlā, Rṣi-vānī, *Sāra-saṅgraha-madhurimā* etc., were published, Mā Mani began to receive numerous letters from different places in India and abroad. Many persons also began to come to her for her *darśana*. Mā was shy by nature. Besides she was the house-wife of a respectable family and illiterate. She was worried to see all this. She said to Gosvāmījī, "You have publicized me. Now people are coming to see me. You kindly remain by my side and make me speak to them as you think I should." Gosvāmījī said, "Don't worry." Afterwards, Mahāprabhu came one day and said "The publication of the Truth through you has given strength to the people, who follow the right path in religion. The Truth, which lay concealed under the cover of attractive looking falsehood in various forms has been uncovered. By publicizing you it has been possible to make the faith of the people firm."

We have referred before to the picture of Gopāla, worshipped by Mā Mani. Gopāla appeared before Mā only when she sat on her *āsana*. But when she returned from Vṛndāvana and lived for some time in Calcutta with her brother Sudhīra, since then He began to live with her always and do different kinds of things to eat. But Gosvāmījī had asked her not to accept anything from anyone. She had so far observed this rule strictly. But now on account of Gopāla she had to break this rule on the advice of Gosvāmījī himself. Gopāla sometimes entered the heart of people and spurred them secretly to serve Him by presenting Him the things He desired. Sometimes He asked someone directly to give Him something. She had to accept all those things.

One day Gopāla said to her, "Mā, someone comes and gives Me *sandeśa*, someone gives cheese, someone butter. Everyone loves Me so much. I love to be young in age, for everyone loves the young. Gosvāmījī and Jagannāthajī have become old. I will not become old. I will remain Bāla-gopāla." Gopāla thus talked to her like a child. This is not strange, because, when Bhagavān performs *Nara-līlā*¹⁰ He behaves exactly like men. When He plays the child He does not feign to be a child. His Yogamāyā Śakti makes Him forget His divinity and behave just like a child.

One day Gopāla said, "Mā, you know what Jagannātha said one day. He said, Everyone loves Gopāla. They give Him all kinds of presents, because He is a child. But they have made Me *Thākura*, which I do

¹⁰ *Līlā*, according to humans.

not like.' I said, 'I am the Gopāla of Vṛndāvana. You are the King of Dvārakā. Therefore You are offered *bhoga* as Thākura. You remain without the enjoyment of the natural and spontaneous love of the devotees. No doubt Mā Maṇi loves You. But You are her elder son. I am her younger son. The young are loved more than the old.'

Gopāla was a child. Therefore He talked like children. But sometimes in a casual way He said things which were of great significance to the devotees.

On 8 Cartra (1964) He said, "That day Dhirena Bhāi said that he could not control his mind. It is not easy to control the mind. The only way to control it is to love *Nāma*. The mind can be controlled only by love. When one regards *Nāma* as his own, and through constant *japa* body, mind and the *Nāma* become one, then the *Nāma* and *Nāmi*¹¹ become One and manifest Their *līlā* in the heart."

In her last days Mā Maṇi remained confined to 'Vraja-dhama,' the house in which she lived. Formerly she remained all the time in the temple of Jagannātha but now she remained all the time on bed because of her illness. But this did not make any difference to her spiritual life and the *rasa*, she relished. She has written that "At this time many great devotees came to my house and purified it by the dust of their feet." The names of some of the great devotees she has mentioned are Śrī Sitārāma Dāsa, Omkāra Nātha, Śrī Durgāprasanna Paramahansa, Śrī Svāmī Praṇavānanda Sarasvatī and Śrī Svāmī Aśimānanda Sarasvatī.

At this time also although outwardly she appeared

¹¹ The Lord, Whom the Name belongs.

to be diseased, inwardly her heart was always full of bliss. Outwardly she lay on bed like a diseased person, but in her inner life she loitered freely and joyfully in a transcendental sphere. She herself disclosed this once when her *Tirtha-guru*¹² offered to take her to see the different temples in his new Ambassador car. She replied, "Bābā! If I started going out for *darśana*, then the *darśana* of His *līlā* which I enjoy at home, will stop."

Once someone, who saw her repeatedly getting up from her bed at night and going to the door, said to her, "Mā! Do you not sleep at night?" She replied, "Bābā! How can I sleep?" Throughout the night Gopāla plays vigorously with His friends and says to me, "We play, you see." On account of His playfulness I cannot sleep at night. Therefore I sleep a little during the day after doing my morning *pūjā*.¹³ But during the day also as soon as the door of the house is closed, His play begins."

Once at about 2 p.m. Mā Maṇi fell ill. The doctor of the government hospital in Puri declared that her condition was hopeless. A famous heart specialist was immediately called from Cuttack. He also said that she would not survive. But at 10 o'clock at night she was seen sitting on the *āsana* and doing *bhajana* as usual. In the morning, when the doctors came to know about this, they said, "She is not a case to be treated by doctors."

¹² Usually a *paṇḍā*, who acts as a guide in a *śrīṅga* or place of pilgrimage.

¹³ Worship.

After that the aforementioned Jyotsanā Devī, who was to Mā Maṇi like her own daughter, said to Gopāla, "Gopāla Bhāi! What are You doing? Is it proper to play with Mā like this. You know that if something happens to her. You will also have to be given *Jala-samādhi*!"¹⁴ The reason why she said like this was that Gosvāmījī and Mā Maṇi had both already said that the Śrī Vighraha served by Mā should be consigned to the sea simultaneously with her funeral. The same night Gopāla said to Jyotsanā in a dream, "Do not worry. My *ilā* will not stop soon. I shall play for some more time. Therefore nothing will happen to Mā Maṇi soon. Mā Yaśodā had not bound Me as much as she has done. She has bound Me to such an extent that I cannot even cross the threshold of her house."

But although Gopāla is free and He can do what He likes, He is not free to act against the wishes of His devotees. He is compelled to act as they wish. Mā Maṇi was now restless to go and live with Gosvāmījī, where he lived. She was often heard saying to him, "Why not now come and take me away. All the work is done. There is nothing that remains."

But there was one work that remained. Gosvāmījī and Mahāprabhu had asked her to publish some parts of her biography. She was compelled to do so. While asking her devotees to arrange for the speedy publication of the biography she said, "All my work is done. What remains is only the printing of this book. After it is printed, I shall be free to go. Until it is printed I shall not be able to go."

The book was printed. At the advice of Mahāprabhu

and Gosvāmījī it was titled '*Jivana-gāthā*'. Its cover was also designed according to the advice of Mahāprabhu. He said to Mā Maṇi, "Mā! On the cover of your *Jivana-gāthā*' ask them to give a big lotus of white colour. Your earlier name was Sarojī. *Saroja* means lotus. Therefore I ask you to do so."

The book was printed. On December 22, 1966 Mā Maṇi sat on the *āsana* to worship Gopāla. After she had worshipped, she said, "Jagannātha! Jagannātha! Now take me." Then she went on repeating "Jagannātha! Jagannātha! Haribol! Haribol!" She also said to the devotees in a sweet voice, "Bābā! Say '*Jagannātha, Jagannātha! Jagannātha, Jagannātha!*'" Chanting '*Jagannātha, Jagannātha!*' she left her body at 1 o'clock. The same day Her body was carried on a *vimāna*¹⁵ to the seashore near Svargadvāra for funeral with *kirtana*. The Śrī Vighraha she worshipped was also carried with her for *Jala-samādhi*.

The funeral was duly performed. But everyone was surprised to see a strange phenomenon. When the *vimāna* was kept on the cremation ground and everyone was circumambulating it with *Nāma-kirtana*, Mā was tightly holding the small *tulasī* pot kept by her side with the ring finger of her right hand! If she did not do so the *tulasī* pot might have fallen when the *vimāna* was being carried. *Tulasī* was dear to her Gopāla. Therefore it was dear to her more than her life. The life was gone. How could she let go what was to her dearer than her life?

¹⁴ Immersion in sea or river

¹⁵ A decorated structure of bamboos for carrying a dead body.

CHAPTER XXV

ŚRĪ TINKAḌI GOSVĀMĪ

(Manoharapur/Navadvīpa)

Śrī Tinkāḍi Gosvāmī (Śrī Kīśorī-Kīśorānanda Bābā) was born in 1906 in Manoharapur, a village in district Medinipur of West Bengal. His father was Śrī Harimohana Gosvāmī and mother Śrīmatī Suradhunī Devī. The family had a large number of ancestral disciples. The number of Harimohana Gosvāmī's own disciples also was not small. The income from donations made by the disciples was plentiful. Therefore Tinkāḍi Gosvāmī was brought up in luxury. He did not have much interest in studies. So his father stopped his education and began to introduce him to his disciples so that he might adopt *gurugiri*¹ as his profession. He also married him to a girl named Sītālāsundarī, from whom he had a son.

Śrī Tinkāḍi Gosvāmī lived luxuriously. He wore spotlessly white clothes made of the finest linen and smoked *hukkā*.² The long tube of the *hukkā* with a silver mouth-piece was always attached to his mouth. The smoke of the sweet-scented tobacco, specially got from Viśnupur, was seen curling round him. He went to the homes of the disciples on palanquin. The *hukkā*

¹ The profession of guru.

² Smoking pipe with long flexible tube.

and a Brahman cook went with him. The cook followed the palanquin on foot.

There was, however, a spark of Bhakti in his heart, which often disturbed him and made him think of the futility of worldly life. The spark was smouldering slowly. It developed suddenly into flames, when his father died only a year after his marriage. A wave of *vairāgya* shook his entire frame. He said to himself, "I must no more waste my time in the trivialities of life. I must wake up and work for a higher destiny. I must renounce the world and go to Vṛndāvana. No doubt, after the death of my father, the responsibility of running the family has fallen upon me. Perhaps I should wait till my son grows up. But who knows, I may not live till then. Death may sweep down upon me any moment and foil all my plans. No, I cannot wait for better times. If, sitting on the bank, I begin to think that I shall bathe, when the waves subside, I shall never be able to bathe, because the waves will never subside. I must jump into the sea right now."

So one day he sneaked out of home without letting anyone know. He went straight to Govardhana and fell at the feet of Siddha Manohara Dāsa Bābā of Govindakuṇḍa. He expressed his resolve to live in Vṛndāvana and do *bhājana* under his guidance. Manohara Dāsa Bābā said, "Gosāin! The time has not yet come for you to live in Vṛndāvana. You must wait till the time comes. Go back and attend to the affairs of the family."

"But I have not come to go back," said Tinkāḍi Gosvāmī. "I have no money for going back."

"You need not bother about that. Your people have already sent a money order for your return passage to

one of your relatives in Vṛndāvana. You go and take the money from him."

Tinkāḍi Gosvāmī had to obey. He returned home after seeing the temples and the other holy places in Vraja. Soon after he returned his wife died. He was at that time 28 years old. His relations began to insist that he should marry again. To avoid them he went out on long pilgrimage. He visited all the holy places from Badrinārāyaṇa in the North to Kanyākumārī in the South. In every temple, to which he went, he prayed to the deity to grant him *śiddhā-bhakti* and fulfill his desire to live in Vṛndāvana. After the pilgrimage, instead of returning home, he again went to Manohara Dāsa Bābā in Govardhana and asked for permission to live in Vṛndāvana. Bābā again said, "Gosāin! Even now the time has not come for your living in Vṛndāvana. Go home and marry. You still have much karma to do. When the time comes, Rādhārāṇī will herself draw you to Vṛndāvana. You need not worry."

He returned home and married Sarasvatī Devī, the daughter of Āśutoṣa Haḍa of a village near Manoharapur. He had two daughters from her. But this did not make any difference to his *vairāgya*. It went on increasing. He hardly lived at home. He travelled from village to village preaching *harināma*. In every village he arranged *akhaṇḍa*³ *harināma-kīrtana* either at the house of one of his disciples, or at some other place. But he did not live with his disciples. He built a thatched cottage at some distance from the village. He lived in that cottage and did *bhajana* from 3 o'clock in the morning till late at night. Only in the evening he came out of the cottage,

³ Non-stop.

when he listened to *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* or some other *Bhakti-śāstra* read to him by someone and participated in the *kīrtana* in which he also danced at times. While dancing he sometimes shouted so loudly in *bhāva* that it seemed the shout would rend the sky.

At this time there was also considerable change in his outward appearance. Instead of fine linen he wore clothes made of coarse cloth and his constant companion was *harināma* and the bag of beads for counting *harināma* instead of *hukkā*.

Tinkāḍi Gosvāmī now shifted to Navadvīpa. In Navadvīpa there lived Phalāhari Bābā, who had his *āśrama* on Manipur Ghāta. He donated the *āśrama* to Tinkāḍi Gosvāmī and went to Vṛndāvana to pass the rest of his life there in *bhajana*. Tinkāḍi Gosvāmī began to live with family in that *āśrama*.

A Gosvāmī of Telpādā in Navadvīpa had the Śrī Vīgrahas Rādhā-Mādhava, Whom he worshipped. After his death one day the Śrī Vīgrahas said to his wife in a dream, "Give us away to Tinkāḍi Gosvāmī." The lady went and told Tinkāḍi Gosvāmī about the dream. Tears began to flow from the eyes of Tinkāḍi Gosvāmī to hear what she said and horripilation appeared all over his body. He said "Mā! I am not eligible for the service of Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava. But since They have expressed the desire to receive my service, I shall certainly bring and serve Them as best as I can." He brought and re-installed Them in his *āśrama* and renamed Them Rādhā-Vallabha.

Tinkāḍi Gosvāmī was now so much absorbed in *bhajana* that it was not possible for him to live at home with family. His home began to appear to him like a dark well without water and relations like trees

devoid of fruits and full of thorns. He began to pass most of his time under trees on the bank of Gangā. Soon his reputation as a saint spread all round in Navadvīpa and people began to come to him for *darśana*. It became impossible for him to do *bhajana* in loneliness anywhere in Navadvīpa. He, therefore, began to do *bhajana* in Bāvalā, a forest at some distance from Navadvīpa.

At this time he again became restless for Vṛndāvana. It began to appear to him that he had a call from Rādhārānī, which he could not resist. Therefore he rushed to Govardhana and fell at the feet of Manohara Dāsa Bābā. He said to him with folded hands and tears in his eyes, "Mahārāja! Kindly do not turn me away this time. Give me *veśa* and shelter under your feet."

This time Bābā gave him permission to live in Vṛndāvana but said, "Gośāin! How can I give you *veśa*. You belong to the family of *ācāryas*, with whose help and blessings people cross the ocean of Māyā. You do not need *veśa*."

Tinkaḍi Gosvāmī then tried to take *veśa* from some other saint. But no one gave him *veśa*, because he was an *ācārya*. Therefore, one day he took the *veśa* of a renouciant Bābājī by putting on an old *kaupina* of Bābā Manohara Dāsa and taking a vow never to return home. He did not need initiation, because he was already initiated by his father.

After taking *veśa* Tinkaḍi Gosvāmī began to do *bhajana* with great austerity. He wore *kaupina* and *uttariya*⁴ made of gunny. He did not live long at one place. He lived sometimes in Premasarovara, sometimes in Varṣānā, Pavana-sarovara, Kāmyavana, Ādibadrī, Resaulī,

Camelivana, Tapovana, Pānighāta, Akrūraghāta, or Durvāsākunḍa. Everyday he got up at 1 a.m., took bath and sat down for *bhajana*. Sometimes if he could not get up until 2 a.m. some spiritual power woke him up. Twice he felt as if Mahāprabhu Himself had awakened him.

It is said that the *ācāryas* of old always live in Vraja and help the *sādhakas* in various ways. Once at night Tinkaḍi Gosvāmī was restless, because he could not concentrate his mind on *bhajana*. At that time a tall and white coloured Vaiṣṇava came and stood before him. When he asked him who he was, he replied, "I am Vallabhācārya. I am pleased with your devotion. I shall give you a *mantra*. If you do the *japa* of that *mantra*, you will be able easily to concentrate your mind." He gave him the *mantra* and disappeared. The *mantra* had the desired effect.⁵

Once a *Vrajavāsī* lady came to Bābā with her eight year old son, named Mathurā Dāsa and said, "Bābā, I deliver this child to you. Kindly accept him. He will render all kinds of service to you." Bābā accepted him. He asked him to go and bathe in Rādhākunḍa. When he had bathed he gave him *mantra*. The boy did not know the importance of the guru. He regarded Bābā as his Bābā (grandfather) and loved and served him accordingly. Bābā also loved him, because he was *Vrajavāsī*. His presence reminded him of Kṛṣṇa and his *līlā*. He gave him to eat all the good things which people offered him. He was so free with him that he often told him the most secret things of his heart.

⁴ A sheet of cloth to cover the upper part of body

⁵ Śrī Vinoda Bihari Dāsa: *Prabhuṇāṁ Śrī Śrī 108 Kīrti Kīrtānanda Bābā*, p. 42

Once Tinkāḍi Gosvāmī was circumambulating Rādhākūṇḍa with Mathurā Dāsa. When, after making obeisance at the *samādhi* of Raghunātha Dāsa, he proceeded towards the *bhājana-kuti* of Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, he said to Mathurā Dāsa, "Mathurā, look, I tell you one thing In *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* what Kāvīrāja Gosvāmī has written about Śrī Rādhākūṇḍa is false." "What has Kāvīrāja Gosvāmī written Bābā?" asked Mathurā Dāsa.

"He has written

'sei kuṇḍe jei eka bāra kare snāna /

tāra rādhā-sama prema Kṛṣṇa kare dāna //

—Anyone, who bathes in Rādhākūṇḍa but once, is blessed by Kṛṣṇa with *prema* like that of Rādhā' I have bathed in the *kuṇḍa* so many times. But neither has Kṛṣṇa given me *prema* nor *darśana*. I shall now go to Bengal and preach that no one should go to Rādhākūṇḍa and no one should believe Kṛṣṇa, because what Kāvīrāja has written about Them is false."

"Do not do that Bābā, because that will hit us *Vrajavāsīs*, who depend on the donations made by the pilgrims."

"Then why don't you pray to Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa for me? You are a *Vrajavāsi*. They will grant your prayer."

"Very well Bābā. I shall pray."

At that time the Manipurī ladies were doing *ārati* of Gīrājā at the spot where Rādhākūṇḍa and Śyāmakūṇḍa meet. As Bābā was proceeding in that direction, he stopped suddenly and said, "Oh! How beautiful! How beautiful! Mathurā look, Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa sitting on an altar, bedecked with jewels! The *sakhīs* performing *ārati*! Oh! How beautiful the *kuṇḍa* filled with milk and how beautiful it's jeweled *ghāṭas*! Mathurā, hold me or I shall fall." Mathurā said, "Oh Bābā! They are the Manipurī ladies,

doing *ārati* of Gīrājā. Where are Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa?"

But as soon as he held Bābā, he saw the *kuṇḍa* filled with milk, though he did not see Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

Mathurā told Bābā about this when he came to his own. Bābā said, "You will see. You will see when the time comes. You do not yet have the eyes to see Rāsarāja Kṛṣṇa and Mahābhāva-vat Rādhā."

But how is it, one may ask, that Bābā got the eyes to see immediately after he had threatened to preach against Kṛṣṇa? The fact is that this son of Nanda is also too simple. He is scared even when a devotee gives him a false threat and is compelled to do what he wants.

It is obvious from the above that Tinkāḍi Gosvāmī had attained *prema*. It was through the eyes of *prema* that he could have the *darśana* of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa with the *sakhīs*. But *prema* is dynamic. It is never satisfied with itself. The more the *prema*, the more the feeling that one is devoid of *prema*. Therefore the more the *prema*, the more the yearning for it. Bābā had only had a glimpse of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. After Their *darśana* Their separation⁶ became unbearable. He wept day and night on account of Their separation. He lost sleep and hunger and life became burdensome to him. One day when he was sitting in meditation with his eyes closed, his inside and outside seemed to have suddenly brightened with the glow of a transcendental light. As he opened his eyes, he saw that Rādhārānī stood before him smiling and shedding round her the light of a thousand moons. She said to him, "You have realized the end you had desired."

⁶ Not having *darśana*.

But you have a lot of work to do. You will come to Me and be always with Me when the time comes." She said this and disappeared.⁷ As soon as She disappeared Tinkadi Gosvāmī became unconscious. On regaining consciousness he felt that his heart and soul and every inch of his body was filled with nectar, which was overflowing through the eyes in the form of tears. After this throughout his life he remained in a state of *bhāva*, which was unearthly and unprecedented.

Once the father of Mathurā Dāsa had gone to Bengal, Mathurā was with Bābā and his mother was alone at home. At about 9 in the morning, when Bābā was meditating, he suddenly cried, "Oh! Mā has fallen!" Mathurā became anxious about his mother. He gave him a jolt and asked, "What has happened Bābā?" Bābā was at that time seeing some *līlā* in *smaraṇa*. His *smaraṇa* stopped. He felt very bad. But he only said, "Oh! Nothing, nothing." In the evening he called Mathurā and said, "Why did you jolt me this morning, when I was having *līlā-darśana*?" Mathurā said, "How could I know what you were doing? You said that Mā had fallen. I thought my mother had fallen. I got anxious about her. So I jolted you."

"Never do that again."

"But why did you say that mother had fallen?"

"I did not mean your mother."

"Then whose mother?"

"You do not know, I saw that Nandalāla was going with his friends to pasture cows. Yaśodā Mā asked

Rohinī Mā to give Him some hot milk. Rohinī Mā went to bring milk. The boys were restive. They asked her to hurry. In haste, while she was bringing the milk, she fell down. The boys cried, "Oh! Mā has fallen." I also said, "Mā has fallen."

For sometime another *Vrajavāsī*, named Ayodhyā Dāsa had also been living with Bābā and serving him. He had wholly dedicated his life to the service of Bābā and served him with all his heart and soul. By serving him day and night sincerely and selflessly he had so identified himself with him that he could read his mind. He could know without his telling him what kind of service he needed at a particular time and started making preparations for the same even before he said anything. He also brought *mādukari* for him. Suddenly he died of cholera. Bābā got anxious about his condition after death. He wished that sincere, selfless and dedicated soul as he was, he got his rightful place in the spiritual world. One night, when he was thus worrying about him, he had a nap. In the nap he heard Rādhārānī saying, "Why do you worry about him? He has come to Me even before you." No wonder, because Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa are pleased more by the service rendered to Their devotees than by service rendered to Them.

Several other devotees came from Bengal after renouncing the world and began to live with Bābā and serve him after taking *dikṣā* from him. He started going with them from village to village to preach *Harināma*. In every village he arranged *Bhāgavata-saptāha*⁸ and *saṁkīrtana*. His disciples got up at 3 o'clock in the morning and did *bhajana*. They also attended the

⁷ Tinkadi Gosvāmī had himself disclosed this to Śrī Priyācarana Dāsa Bābā of Govardhana.

⁸ A week-long reading of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*.

Bhāgavata-saptāha and participated in *kīrtana*, while Bābā sat throughout the day under some tree in a lonely place and did *japa* and *smaraṇa*. After the *Bhāgavatam-saptāha* he arranged a feast with the help of the *Vrajavāsīs*. The *Vrajavāsīs* brought provisions for the feast from their homes. The *Vrajavāsīs* and the people, who came to attend the *pāṭha* and *kīrtana* all participated in the feast, while Bābā and his disciples ate *mādhukeri*.

The number of Tinkāḍi Gosvāmī's householder and renunciant disciples went on increasing. The renunciant disciples wanted to live with him. Therefore he built *āśramas* for them in Rādhākūṇḍa, Tapovana, Govardhana and Vṛndāvana. The *āśrama* in Vṛndāvana was built near Keśiḡhaṭa and was named Murārīmohana Kunja after the name of the deities installed in it.

Once, when Tinkāḍi Gosvāmī was living in Tapovana, several rich persons came to him for *darśana*. The *dacoits* came to know about this. They thought that the rich men had given him lots of money. Therefore they came to him at 12 o'clock in the night. He remained undisturbed. He gave them *āsana* to sit and asked them to eat something. The *dacoits* were hungry. They agreed to eat. Tinkāḍi Gosvāmī asked a disciple to cook for them. While he was cooking Tinkāḍi Gosvāmī was chanting aloud *Harināma*. His loving behaviour and *Harināma* made the *dacoits* forget the purpose for which they had come. After they had eaten the food cooked for them, they offered one hundred rupees to Tinkāḍi Gosvāmī and said, "Bābā! We are not good men. The purpose for which we came was also not good. But your company has brought about an unprecedented change in us. You

can now live here and do *bhājana* under our protection. No harm will ever come to you."

Tinkāḍi Gosvāmī saw his *iśa* in every living being. His heart was full of love and respect for all. He could not think of violence against anyone. Therefore even the violent creatures, who came in contact with him, became non-violent. Several times, when he did *bhājana* in some forest, lions and tigers appeared before him, but went away without doing any harm to him.

Once during winter he lived in the forest, called Ratankūṇḍa with some of his disciples. One day while he was sitting in meditation and his body was covered with a shawl, a disciple saw that a poisonous snake had entered the shawl and was staying there. Only its tail was out of the shawl. Tinkāḍi Gosvāmī was absorbed in *līlā-smaraṇa*. He was not at all aware of the snake. The disciple was deeply worried to see this. But he did not raise a cry or do anything else to turn it away. After sometime the snake crawled away, without doing any harm to Tinkāḍi Gosvāmī.

Once some disciples of Tinkāḍi Gosvāmī took him to Nīlacala. Mathurā Dāsa went with him. In Nīlacala he always thought of Vṛndāvana. On seeing Cātaka Parvatā he felt that he saw Govardhana. On seeing the sea he thought he saw Yamunā and said to Mathurā Dāsa, "Look Mathurā, how Yamunā is in spate."

One day some devotees offered him cheese to eat. But he did not eat. When Mathurā asked him to eat, he said, "Mathurā, I have no appetite. Only a short while ago I took *roti* in Rādhākūṇḍa."

Mathurā said, "Bābā! You are lying. You are here

in Nīlācala. How could you go to Rādhākūṇḍa to eat *rotī*?"

"No, you ask your mother. She was circumambulating Rādhākūṇḍa. I saw her near Lalitākūṇḍa. She was wearing a green *sārī* and carrying milk in a small pot. I said, 'Mā! I am hungry. Give me *rotī*.' She said, 'Come to my home after I have done *parikramā*.' I went to her home. She gave me a *rotī* and some vegetable. If you think I am lying, you can write a letter to her and enquire."

Mathurā wrote to his mother. She confirmed all that Tinkāḍi Gosvāmī had said. The fact is that even if he lived in Nīlācala or Navadvīpa physically, in his subtle body he lived always in Rādhākūṇḍa.

Once when Tinkāḍi Gosvāmī was living in Vṛndāvana he again expressed his desire to go to Nīlācala. His attendants wrote to his disciple Sushīla Bhaumika of Navadvīpa and Dilīpa Kumāra Mitra of Calcutta, asking them to arrange for his visit to Nīlācala. After two or three days he dropped the idea of going to Nīlācala at the insistence of the devotees of Vṛndāvana and sent telegrams to the aforementioned disciples asking them not to arrange for his visit to Nīlācala. At the same time he started *Bhāgavata-saptāha* in the Rādhā-Murārimohana Kunja in Vṛndāvana. Unfortunately the telegrams did not reach Navadvīpa and Calcutta in time. Sushīla Bhaumika and Dilīpa Kumāra booked four seats in the plane for going from Delhi to Bhuvaneśvara and reached Vṛndāvana on the third day of the *Bhāgavata-saptāha*. Tinkāḍi Gosvāmī did not want to go to Nīlācala during the *Bhāgavata-saptāha*. But circumstances compelled him to go.

From Bhuvaneśvara he went to Nīlācala and stayed in Thākura Haridāsa Maṭha. For three months during

his stay in the Maṭha, *pāṭha*, *kīrtana* and *bharidārās*⁹ continued to enliven the environment. After three months devotees came from Navadvīpa to take him to Navadvīpa and he had to go.

The devotees brought him to Navadvīpa. But as usual he lived in Navadvīpa only in body. His soul was in Vṛndāvana. He was always so absorbed in Vṛndāvana-*līlā* that day and night made no difference to him. For him the day was night and night was day. Once, when absorbed in *līlā* he kept on sitting till 12 o'clock at night. A devotee said, "Bābā! It is now 12 o'clock. Kindly lie down and sleep." He replied, "Do I ever sleep during the day?"

Perhaps it was not possible for Tinkāḍi Gosvāmī now to live out of Vṛndāvana and he wanted to go there never to return. So one day, when his disciple Vṛndāvana Dāsa was going from Navadvīpa to Vṛndāvana, he said to him, "You go. I shall soon follow."

Since Tinkāḍi Gosvāmī desired to go to Vṛndāvana, Murārimohana, the deity in his *āśrama* in Vṛndāvana also became restless for his company. Tinkāḍi Gosvāmī received a letter from Kisorī Dāsa Bābā of Kesighāṭa Thaura, in Vṛndāvana. He wrote, "Bābā! I saw in a dream this morning a black boy saying to me 'You people sent Gosāin away from here in the midst of *Bhāgavatam-saptāha*. Now go and bring him here at once.' I said to the boy, 'Who are you?' He replied, 'I am Murārimohana.' Therefore, Bābā you come here at once."

The letter was read to Bābā. On hearing the letter he became silent. His eyes closed. Two days later, on Phālgun Kṛṣṇa Navamī of the year 1984, he suddenly

⁹ Feasts.

shouted, '*Jai Nityānanda Rāma! Jai Nityānanda Rāma!*' and left the body to go and meet Murārīmohana in Vṛndāvana.

At that time Mathurā Dāsa was in Rādhākuṇḍa. The next morning at 5 a.m. he saw Tinkāḍi Gosvāmī in a dream. He said to him, "Mathurā! Look, I have come to Rādhākuṇḍa. Let us go to bathe." Mathurā told his mother about the dream. She said, "Probably Bābā has left the body and come to Vṛndāvana in *siddha-deha*." The next day Mathurā Dāsa received a telegram which confirmed what she had said.

Born in 1909 Dr. O.B.L. Kapoor strong leanings towards the Advaitic philosophy of Śaṅkara. In August 1931, when he was working as a research scholar in the University of Allahabad he met his guru Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī



Gosvāmī Prabhupāda, who pulled him out of his Advaitic moorings and initiated him into Bhakti. On his advice and under his close supervision he wrote a thesis on the Philosophy of Śrī Caitanya. The thesis was approved by the Allahabad University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Dr. Kapoor has the unique distinction of being the first Doctor of Philosophy of this prestigious university.

He worked as Research Fellow at the Indian Institute of Philosophy, D. Litt. Scholar, University of Allahabad, and Professor and Head of the Department of Philosophy, B.R. College, Agra till 1952, after which he joined U.P. Educational Service Class I and worked as Professor and Head of the Department of Philosophy at the K.N. Govt. College, Gyanpur (Varanasi) and Principal, Govt. College, Gyanpur/Rampur till his retirement in 1967. Since 1967 he has been living in Vṛndāvana and writing books and articles in Hindi and English on topics relating to Bhakti. He has written more than 30 books and a large number of articles, published in different journals. His writings have been widely appreciated.